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CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES

OR

DISCOURSES FOR ALL THE GREAT FEASTS
OF THE YEAR, EXCEPT THOSE OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JEREMIAS BONOMELLI, D.D.

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VOLUME I

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Author's Preface

THE word "mystery," according to its etymology, means something *veiled* or *hidden.* Now there are innumerable things *veiled* or *hidden,* even in the natural order, which will never be known, or which, if known at all, will be known only to a few and after the lapse of years; and these are what are called the *mysteries of nature.* With these *mysteries* we are not here concerned.

In the ecclesiastical and religious sense the word "mystery" signifies a *truth so veiled or hidden* that it transcends the powers of reason, not only of this man or of that, or at this time or at that, but simply of every man and at all times; in other words, a mystery, in the rigorous and theological sense of the word, is a *truth that is absolutely supernatural and beyond reason.*

A mystery, however, does not signify a doctrine contrary to reason, or one that implies a contradiction, as some believe and assert;[1] were this so it would be man's duty to reject a mystery as something insulting both to him and to God, in whose name it is announced.

[1]Mr. Jules Simon, formerly Minister of France, and a rationalist, while admitting the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul, writes thus of a mystery: "It is a proposition that contains formal contradictions."—Natural Religion.

Neither does a mystery signify an incomprehensible doctrine, that is imposed without reason or any sort of proof. This would be a tyranny. There are no *intrinsic* proofs, but there are *extrinsic* and peremptory proofs, namely, the proofs of its credibility, which show that God has imposed the mystery and wills that it shall be firmly believed on His word.

The servant believes his master, the soldier his general, the pupil his teacher, the son his father, when the latter exact of them things they do not understand. They obey on the principle of authority; and why should not man do as much in dealing with God?

A mystery is a truth, an order from Heaven, communicated to us in a sealed letter; we have a right to examine the seal; if it is God's seal, that is enough; we blindly accept without question what the letter contains. The proofs of the fact and the motives for believing it are the seal of God.

It is clear, then, that a mystery, although it is neither comprehended nor comprehensible, becomes reasonable, if not in itself, certainly in the rational proofs of its credibility.

And now let us go forward another step. Neither does a mystery signify a proposition in no way intelligible, an enigma, or something senseless. No, such is not a mystery according to

Catholic faith. When the Church proposes to us a mystery to be believed, it is indeed a fact such that we can not penetrate into the depths of its truth, grasp its intimate relations, and see it as a whole and as it is in itself, but it is also a fact such that we can and ought to form some clear and precise idea of it, so that we may know what we believe. If we should have no determinate notion of a mystery we could never make an act of faith and say, *I believe.* When I believe a truth I ought to be able to give an answer to the question, *What do you believe?* But I shall not be able to reply to the other question, *How do you explain this truth that you believe?* because this refers to its inward nature and in this precisely consists the nature of the mystery.

Let us go on to particulars. I believe the mystery of the unity of the nature and the trinity of the Persons in God; also the mystery of the Incarnation, and that of transubstantiation in the Eucharist, which are the greatest mysteries of faith. Now when my mind is face to face with these mysteries, is it also face to face with what is *non-intelligible,* so that it knows nothing of that with which it is dealing? Is there not a single ray of light entering my mind to clear its vision? Is it looking into a darkness so dense that it is not broken by a single flash of light? If that were so we should not be able to distinguish one mys-

tery from another, and we should have only one sole mystery, the absence of all light and the most dense darkness possible; we should have an abyss, a nothing. All this is absurd, and a mystery understood in this sense would be what Rousseau calls it, an outrage and a tyranny.

Now to return to the three highest mysteries just mentioned. You have in the first the ideas of nature and of person; in the second, of a divine nature and of a human nature; in the third, of a common substance changed into another. You have surely some conception, more or less exact, of nature and person, whether divine or human; of a material substance and its accidents, and of its change into another. Now you have the fundamental conceptions of these three great mysteries and you have these conceptions so determined that they answer to the words that call them forth. The elements, then, that go to make up a mystery are intelligible and they stand out before the eye of the mind that contemplates them. But how one sole divine nature is compatible with three equal Persons, or how one divine Person is so united with human nature that there is but one sole individual and He divine; or how the substance of bread and wine is transformed into the body of Christ, while the accidents remain, I do not comprehend, and here is the mystery. The terms of the mystery are known, their intrinsic

relations one to another are not known. This is why in a mystery we have an *intelligible* part, that is, if I may so express myself, swallowed up in the abyss of the *incomprehensible.* I see a tree, but I do not see its roots; I see a volcano sending up its flame toward the sky and pouring out lava on the sides of the mountain, but I do not see the cause that produces all this; I see the surface of the sea, but I do not see its mountains, its valleys, and its plains; these are hidden in its depths. A mystery, is not, by any means, a contradiction, it is not *non-intelligible,* but it is *incomprehensible.* Bossuet happily expresses this truth by a similitude. A mystery, he says, is like two ropes, the ends of which I hold, one in my right hand and one in my left. They are tied together at a far distant point; in looking at them they seem to me to be parallel, but I know that they converge, because one who has seen them joined at a certain point has assured me of it. It is the impotence of my eye, not the reality of the fact, that makes me believe them to be parallel; it is the feebleness of my mind that prevents me from being able to combine the terms of a mystery, because the distance and the depth are too great; my feebleness of mind I impute to the truth, like a child, who, being unable to follow a man who runs, complains not of its own feebleness, but of him who is stronger than it; or like one who, gazing at the sun at mid-

day, and realizing that he can not see, says that the sun diffuses not light, but darkness.

And now we can take another step forward. Not only is a mystery not a contradiction; not only is a mystery not accepted blindly without proofs, both certain and evident; not only is it intelligible in its terms, but even up to a certain point we can look into its recesses and discover there some aspects, some points that are answers to the questionings of our reason. These will be affinities, analogies, similitudes, trifling matters, if you will, but yet enough to lead us to know that between a mystery and our mind there is not only no opposition, but certain points of contact. No man has yet explored the bottom of the ocean so perfectly as to be able to furnish a detailed topographical chart of it; here and there specimens have been obtained and the drag-net of the explorer has placed before us some of the flora and fauna of those fearful oceanic depths, in some places more than 5,000 feet. Do we know the bed of the ocean? No. Have we some idea of it? Yes, and the knowledge we have may go on growing in completeness until some day in the future we may possibly know the surface of the bed of the ocean as well as we know that of the earth. So also with regard to mysteries. Borne up on the wings of faith, with the Church and her teachers as guides, let us with the eye of reason look into their depths;

like the drag-net of the explorer of the ocean, it will occasionally catch glimpses of light, that are, as it were, specimens of the treasures of light that lie hidden within them. Let us thank God for this much, always, however, bearing in mind that, if man shall be some day able perfectly to explore the bed of the ocean, we shall never in our present state be able wholly to see the depths of a mystery; that we shall be able to do only on the day when we shall see God face to face as He is. For the present we must be content to see the glory of the white and purple dawn that goes before the rising of the sun, but we can not expect to see the sun itself.

Mystery covers and shrouds as with a veil more or less transparent the whole material, spiritual, and moral world. Where do you not find the obscure and the mysterious? It is everywhere within you and without, in the heavens, on earth, and in the bowels of the earth; the shadow and the penumbra of the mysterious penetrate everywhere, and man, while with the torch of science in his hand he forces the clouds of the mysterious to recede, still sees them ever before him; if they are dissipated in one point they always bank up in another, and cast a veil over the extreme border of the horizon. Now if in created things there is mystery everywhere, ever pursuing them as a shadow does the body, and bearing

undeniable witness to the extreme feebleness of our reason, why will not the same be true of it with regard to God, their creator and preserver? If we do not comprehend the effects how shall we comprehend the Primal Cause? It is, therefore, a matter most clearly evident that God, though *supremely intelligible,* is also the mystery of mysteries, the culmination of all mysteries; He is essential and infinite light, and at the same time He is darkness, the darkness of excessive light. This is what the Fathers teach, this is the astounding teaching of the so-called Dionysius, who has the honor of having the first part of his "Mystical Theology" annotated by St. Thomas. God by His very essence is primarily *intelligible* in His existence, which is luminous to the eyes of all; but He is an unsearchable mystery in His Being and in His perfections.[1] Who can comprehend His essence and His perfections except Himself? Who can fix the eye of his mind on that divine life and see how the Father of Himself generates the Son, and how together with the Son by the one eternal act He breathes forth the Holy Ghost? Who can comprehend how in the two-fold act of generating the Son and breathing forth the Holy

[1]The Schools, with their usual clearness, distinguish in everything, first, *Utrum sit,* that is, in matter of fact does the thing exist; second, *Quid sit,* what is it; third, *Quomodo sit,* the way in which it exists. That God exists is clearly evident; who He is and especially how He exists is an ineffable mystery, and yet even here the reason has a large field to traverse.

Ghost, the whole interior life of the Primal and Infinite Being is unfolded and completed? That boundless ocean of divine Being, as St. Gregory Nazianzen calls it, which is in itself purest light, without a shadow of darkness, becomes by very excess of light inaccessible to all intelligent creatures, who will be able to rise up to Him only when by His grace He will deign to raise them to so great an honor.

The Divine Word, light of light, splendor of light itself, the substantial image of the Father, becomes man and therefore pours into His assumed nature all of the sea of His own life of which it is capable. That divine and changeless light lights this lamp, that will never be put out, and clothes it round about and penetrates it with its own infinite splendors. From this it follows that the impenetrable mystery of the one divine Essence in the three Persons is reflected outside God in another form; that is, in one sole Person in two distinct natures, the divine and the human. In the Incarnation, in Jesus Christ, God-Man, we have the center, the culminating point, of the divine mysteries, precisely because He is God and man, and in Him all extremes come together. He, so to say, gathers up in Himself all the mysteries proper to the divine Essence, those of human nature, and those that flow from the personal union of one with the other. The entire life of

Jesus Christ, considered as the life of the Man-God, is one uninterrupted series of mysteries, which, like a chain of mountains, has its more elevated peaks, and therefore they are hidden among clouds. Such are the Birth of Christ, His Circumcision, His Manifestation to the Magi or the Epiphany, His glorious Resurrection, His Ascension, the establishment of His kingdom on earth or Pentecost, and the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, the completion of the mystery of the Incarnation. These are the chief mysteries of the life of Christ, and in them two things are to be distinguished: First, the fact itself, in its historical materiality, if I may so express myself; and next, the reasons, the why of the fact, and the teachings, theoretical and practical, that it contains. The historical fact, which is recorded in the Gospel and which fell under the senses of those who saw and narrated it, differs in nothing from other historical facts as to its proofs and certainty; but as to its importance, its intrinsic reasons, its teachings, the end to which it is ordained, it differs wholly from other facts and becomes a mystery before which we bow down and adore. Christ, God-Man, is the head and heart of the Church, and in Him, as it is hardly necessary to say, are centered all the thoughts and affections of believers. Hence the Church is ever at pains to keep constantly living in the faithful

the memory of Jesus Christ, and to make Him live in them all and in each, one by one, by every possible agency, by the preaching of the word, by the sacraments, by faith, by prayer, and by grace. Her ceaseless office is to lead souls to Christ and by the teaching of His doctrine and the participation of His grace to make His very life course through them.

What is the Church? asks Mhöler. She is an appendage to Christ, a continuation of the Incarnation throughout all time.

This is the purpose the Church has in view in appointing, with a wisdom all her own, at fixed intervals throughout the year certain days on which to recall to the minds of the faithful the works and leading mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ, so that in the course of the year His whole life is unfolded and passes as in a picture before them, and thus it can truthfully be said that He is ever living in their midst. From Christmas, the birth of Christ, until the feast of the Body of Christ or *Corpus Christi,* and on until All Saints, what is the Church doing in her liturgy if not reminding her children of Christ and calling upon them to make a solemn profession of faith in the principal mysteries that were conspicuous in the course of His life? And this commemoration and abiding and solemn profession of faith in the great mysteries of the life of Christ is an exalted and per-

ennial teaching, in every sense most useful to us all.

To some it may appear strange that the setting forth of the mysteries should be of service to man, for it would seem that they furnish no light to the mind and hence can not stimulate the will, which is moved only by the light that comes from the mind.

Faith presents to us the mystery, that is the hidden truth, which, of course, and this needs no demonstration, does not enlighten my mind inasmuch as it is *hidden;* and yet precisely because it is hidden, or because it is a mystery, it does enlighten me. How so? A mystery halts my reason in its proud march and says to it: Thus far and no farther. A mystery is a barrier that blocks my way and makes me reflect and enter into myself, and confess that my reason is weak and impotent; it humbles and breaks my pride and in effect makes me know myself better, and renders me more modest and more prudent in my judgments. This is the first fruit of a mystery. While a mystery, by halting me on its very threshold, brings me to know and feel my weakness, which is the highest knowledge, it also, incredible to say, elevates and ennobles my reason and opens up to it an immense field. How? Our knowledge of God is the highest and most perfect when we are able to say: "God is infinite and incomprehensi-

ble!" When our mind is, as it were, shipwrecked in the limitless ocean of God's Being, and like one looking to the right and the left, before and behind, above and below, and seeing no confines anywhere, feels itself overpowered by such greatness, and cries out: "O eternal, O immense, O infinite Perfection, O Abyss of Truth!" then has it reached the uttermost heights of the knowledge of God. The mystery necessarily leads it to the conclusion that God is incomprehensible and hence, while it humbles its natural pride, it completes and perfects its knowledge.

Finally, it is characteristic of human nature to increase its exertions in proportion to the difficulties it encounters. It would seem that the fact of some failing in a difficult enterprise begets and fosters in others a desire to make a fresh trial. Say that some have failed in an effort to scale one of the peaks of the Alps and have met their death in the attempt—at once another band of daring men set out to accomplish it; or say that out of Central Africa comes the news of a catastrophe, in which a number of bold explorers have fallen—forthwith others equally dauntless offer to follow in their footsteps and to risk life and limb in carrying forward the undertaking to a successful issue. The difficult, the mysterious, and the unknown have a powerful attraction for strong minds, not only in the physical but still more in

the intellectual world. A mystery is unknown, and there is a strong impulse to study it from every side to see in as far as is possible its proportions, and to bring out the harmony of its parts; in a sense a mystery is like a voice constantly crying in the ear of man: "Courage! Forward! Never give up! Excelsior!"

I have said that the principal mysteries of our faith, which are distributed at intervals along the course of the liturgical year, are: the Nativity, the Circumcision, the Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, the Body of Our Lord, or Corpus Christi, Trinity and the Feast of All Saints, and hence the Church desires that on these days there shall be a display of all the pomp of sacred worship. On these days the bishop himself usually celebrates the sacred mysteries with all the majesty of the pontifical rite, or at least he assists at them and addresses the assembled faithful. This is what I have certainly done from the day that I entered upon the government of this diocese, when my health permitted or when not otherwise engaged in the sacred ministry. And since the great mysteries of our religion are not only such, but inexhaustible mines of sublime truths and present to those who meditate upon them ever new aspects under which they may be viewed, it has seemed to me a wise and useful thing to treat them from various points of view and to draw

from them practical lessons answering to the needs of the people. Moreover, a change in the way of treating a subject has the not unimportant advantage of presenting the mysteries under a new phase and of greatly stimulating interest in the hearers.

Following my custom, which certainly many will not approve, and with reason, but which suits me, whenever I am to preach, especially in the cathedral, I jot down upon a piece of paper the outlines of my subject, giving particular attention to the order of the ideas, and then I develop them, trusting to the inspiration of the moment. Here I have gathered together all these rough drafts, thrown them into orderly arrangement, and developed them as best I could, and now I present them to the reader in the form of Discourses.

In the first volume are contained eighteen Discourses, eight on the Nativity, three on the Circumcision, and seven on the Epiphany. I do not, of course, claim to say anything new, but only to cast the old into new forms, as St. Vincent of Lerins says: *Non nova, sed vetera noviter dicta.* I cherish the hope that these Discourses will benefit those of the clergy who will have the patience to read them attentively. The reader may find two points interesting in these Discourses, first, the study I have given to bring out clearly the rational part of the mysteries, illustrating them

by similitudes and comparisons that make the conception of them more accessible; and next, the care I have taken to set forth the Catholic doctrine in the clearest and most precise language; avoiding all that display of imagery and rhetoric which clouds and obscures the simplest ideas. We priests, sent to preach the Gospel, should have ever before our minds the example of Jesus Christ, the Teacher of teachers, whose ministers we are. He announced the most exalted truths and the most profound mysteries in simple and popular language and in short sentences. In the words of Jesus Christ the idea is as transparent as if His words were luminous crystal; there is not a word too many nor a word too few, and children could understand Him. And when necessary He had recourse to parables and He did not Himself disdain to explain them, which He did with a clearness that will ever be the amazement of the world. Let Him be our model. And, finally, let us keep in mind these words of St. Paul: "But in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding (that is, so as to be understood), that I may instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a (unknown) tongue."[1]

CREMONA, January 27, 1894.

JEREMIAS BONOMELLI,
Bishop.

Feast of St. John Chrysostom.

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

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The Mystery of the Holy Nativity

CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES

DISCOURSE I

The Fitness of the Incarnation

God! We may consider Him in Himself, by fixing the eye of the mind, illuminated by faith, on His measureless Being, on that ocean of light, which, in the language of the Fathers, is best and most perspicuously seen when it is not seen at all; and we may also consider Him by ranging through that other sea, finite indeed, but for us boundless, of the stupendous and diversified works of His hands, scattered throughout heaven and earth.

Fixing the eye of the mind, illuminated by faith, on the inward nature of God, in so far as our weakness permits, which only through objects of sense apprehends that which it afterward makes worthy of the intellect, we see that He is eternal, immutable, immense, infinite, one, most simple, and sovereignly perfect; the first Being, not made, from which comes everything that exists. Through the splendors of that infinite light, in the unchangeable unity of Being, we see somewhat, yet very little, by reason, and by faith we

firmly believe: That there are three Persons, one emanating from the other, as a ray emanates from light, and as heat emanates from a ray; as thought emanates from the mind, and from thought a spark of love. Each Person is distinct from the other, and yet each has the whole of the divine Essence; just as my thought and my will are distinct from my soul, and both of them possess it equally, or rather both are the soul itself.

If from the unsearchable depths of the divine Essence we turn our eyes to the works which He has completed, and is still completing outside Himself, not because He has need of them, but out of pure love, what do we see?

We see that God by a word has drawn the universe out of nothing, that universe of which our earth is but an atom rolling in limitless space. This is the first work which God of His own free will completed outside Himself, the first dim dawning of His light. When in the course of forty centuries all things were made ready, He, who is the Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, made Himself the Son of man and was conceived in the womb of a virgin; a ray of the Eternal Light entered into the calyx of the purest lily the hand of God could create, and the human nature and the divine were bound together in ineffable and completest wedlock. This is the second act, which God, nineteen hundred years

ago, by a miracle solely of His bounty, completed outside Himself, and the memory of which we this day celebrate solemnly and with holy joy.

This is the mystery of mysteries, a mystery which only the love of God could conceive and execute, a mystery in the presence of which human reason is baffled and in its bewilderment is tempted to cry out: "It is impossible! It is impossible!"

But if we consider the mystery calmly, and strive, through the dense darkness in which it is enveloped, to study the symmetry and harmony of its parts, we shall see flashes of light leap forth from it, such and so many, as will teach us that not only is it not antagonistic to reason, but marvelously conformable to it. All this we shall see, if you will be good enough to follow me attentively and with a desire of knowing the truth.

Before entering upon the discussion of this vast subject it is necessary to determine with the greatest possible precision in what, according to Catholic teaching, the mystery of the Incarnation consists. It is as follows: When the time appointed by God had come He created a soul as perfect as was possible to His wisdom and omnipotence; He also formed in the womb of Mary, without any sort of human intervention, a body equally the most perfect possible; and to this soul, in the very act of creating it, and to this body, in the very act of

forming it and joining it to the soul, the second Person of the august Trinity, the Son of God, united Himself, and united Himself in such way that the result of this union was one sole individual, at once God and man. Just as man has a body and soul, and is yet but one sole individual, one sole person, visible and mortal as to his body, invisible and immortal as to his soul, so in the mystery of the Incarnation Jesus Christ is one sole individual, one sole Person, true God and true man, perfect God and perfect man, visible and mortal as man, invisible and immortal as God. His body is in all things like unto ours, save and except in whatever is the consequence of sin. His soul, endowed with intelligence and a most free will, was filled with all the knowledge and grace of which it was capable from the very first instant of His existence.

Now is this mystery, being always a mystery and incomprehensible, in harmony at once with the perfections of the divine nature and with the needs and scope of the human? Yes, and this we shall see if we follow the guidance of the Fathers and especially of St. Thomas, the Angel of the Schools.

The Incarnation, as every one knows, implies two terms distinct and infinitely distant from each other; God and man, united together by the closest of all ties, the tie of personality. First of

all let us consider the fitness of the Incarnation in its relation to God.

The Incarnation is an act that God completes outside Himself, and therefore it is a sovereignly free act. What is the end or scope of any act whatever that God completes outside Himself? The chief and primary end is the manifestation of His perfections, and the secondary end, subordinated to the primary, is the good of creatures. An outward act of God is great and perfect in the measure in which His perfections are manifest in it; just as the triumph of a monarch is splendid in the measure in which it illustrates his power, his wisdom, and the strength of his genius. Now in the Incarnation of the Son of God we see the divine perfections manifested in all their magnificence.

First of all, His wisdom stands out in fullest light, in that it could conceive and carry into effect the wonderful design of uniting the human nature with the divine in such a way that God should be truly man and man truly God, and that the honor and the glory God receives outside Himself should be infinite, as is that which He has necessarily within Himself. God is one in Essence and trine in Persons; the unity of the Essence unfolds into a trinity of Persons; and all this immense ocean of light and divine love is shut up in the unsearchable depths of the divine Essence,

where God is glory adequate to Himself in the generation of His Word and in the breathing of His Love. In the Incarnation the divine Word, equal to the Father and to the Holy Ghost, according to our way of thinking, goes forth from God, and puts Himself into the assumed humanity, and, if it may be said, makes Himself and His glory two-fold. In the very instant in which the Incarnation is complete, the Son of God is also the Son of man, and from the depths of the universe outside God a voice is lifted up, crying out: "Thou, O God, art My Father; I, a man, am equal to Thee, and I give Thee an adequate honor." The divine wisdom found a way to bring it about that the finite should be also infinite, and that the glory given to God by man should be rigorously infinite and divine. And is not this a prodigy of wisdom?

The power of God is also apparent in the Incarnation in that it unites three things, most unlike in themselves, a body, a soul, and the divine Word, in one sole Person. Between God and the creature there stretches an immense abyss, which heaven and earth multiplied millions and millions of times could not in an eternity fill up. In the Incarnation God has thrown a bridge across this measureless abyss, uniting and bringing together by the closest ties the two shores of the increate and the created, of the changeless and the change-

able, of eternity and time, of the impassable and passable, of God and man. Contemplate this bridge which touches earth and heaven, and admire the wisdom and power of the Architect, who conceived and executed it.

There are in God two sovereign and equal perfections which, though seemingly antagonistic, are marvelously harmonized in the Incarnation, namely, *mercy* and *justice.* The former asks for the pardon of the guilty, the latter inexorably demands their punishment; the one opens its arms and bids all sinners to come confidently to its embrace; the other with an austere look thrusts them from it. How can these two perfections, of each of which God is and should be equally jealous, be reconciled? How can the rights of each remain whole and intact? The Incarnation solves the difficult problem. The Son of God, in taking to Himself our poor human nature and in offering Himself an expiatory victim for all men, gives us a sovereign proof of His love, and this is the greatest triumph of His *mercy;* in taking upon Himself the penalty due to us and in satisfying in the sacrifice of the Cross beyond all measure the debt we owed God, God's *justice* was placated and the price of the ransom more than paid. Such was wisdom's sublime plan. In Jesus Christ, God and man, *mercy* became *justice* and *justice mercy; mercy* made Him the victim of *justice,* and *justice*

made Him the victim of *mercy.* Say that God had gratuitously condoned the sin of mankind, and certainly He might have done so, in which case we should have had a triumph of *mercy,* but where would have been the triumph of *justice?* In the Incarnation the triumph of the one is inseparably linked with the triumph of the other, and hence there is true peace; *mercy* and *peace* embrace and kiss.

Side by side with the wisdom and power, the mercy and justice of God in the Incarnation, His providence is also resplendent. Having determined the end it was fitting that He should contrive the means that would most easily lead to its attainment. The primary end of God is to lead men on to a knowledge of Himself, for in this knowledge is life. Now man must rise to the knowledge of the invisible God by means of visible things; by creatures, as by so many rounds of a ladder, he must rise up to God the Creator. But unfortunately men stopped at the creature; they knew and loved only creatures, they found all their felicity in them; they were deaf to the voice, crying to them and saying: "Lift up your hearts, rise up to God, who is above and beyond all visible things." Men were wholly immersed in the visible and material. Then, as St. Athanasius says, God came down from on high and by the Incarnation made Himself sensible, so that men

could see and handle Him and know His very self, and know invisible truths through the words that fell from His lips and came in upon the ear, and through the ear found an entrance into the heart, as is said in the Preface of the Mass: "That knowing *Him visibly, we may through Him be carried onward to a love of the invisible. Ut dum visibiliter cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur.*" For the mute but eloquent language of creatures, bearing witness to God, was substituted in the Incarnation the clear and living accents that fell from the lips of the Man-God and were intelligible to all. And in this device of infinite mercy is not that Providence luminous, which reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly?

But from the heights of heaven let us come down to earth and consider the Incarnation in its relation to human nature, and we shall see still clearer evidences of its fitness.

Say that a barbarian had with profane hand disfigured the "Moses" of Michael Angelo and ruined the "Transfiguration" of Raphael. Were these two artists living what would they do? I believe that those hands that had drawn forth from the marble that speaking countenance and had painted upon the canvas those breathing figures would do their work over again and would give themselves no peace until they had restored

to their original beauty those miracles of genius. Now man, as he came forth from His hands, is the masterpiece of the Creator; he is an abridgment of the beauties of creation; on his countenance is luminous all the beauty of the image of God, of that Word who created him.

In the very beginning the hand of an enemy horribly disfigured that splendid work, leaving, however, some outlines that still recalled its ancient beauty. Could the Word, that had made him so beautiful, abandon him to himself? This would be to confess that He had been overcome by the enemy, who could make this his boast. It was but fitting, then, that the same mind that had conceived, and the same hands that had fashioned that masterpiece of beauty, should reconstruct him after the ancient pattern, should make him again more beautiful than before, that so the triumph of the divine Artificer might be more complete and the ignominy of the wicked one, who had so brutally spoiled and disfigured him, might be more conspicuous.[1] The immortal, good, and all-powerful God can not be as the architect, who seeing the building ruined that is the work of his hands, and not being able to rebuild it, abandons

[1]The Fathers ask, and St. Thomas following in their footsteps asks, why the Son, rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost assumed human nature. Among other reasons they give this, which is a beautiful one: The Son is the substantial image of the Father; it was fitting, then, that He, the substantial image of the Father, should restore His created image in man, which had been disfigured and marred both by man and by the demon.

it to its fate; God repairs, if they are reparable, all the works of His hands, and He can not and will not abandon them to the power of the enemy. He could repair the human race that had so miserably fallen, and He willed to do so; He came to restore what He Himself had made and to imprint again upon it His own features.

St. Gregory of Nyssa[1] says that man came forth from the hands of God, the Great Builder, like most pure gold; the enemy of God and man mixed dross with this gold and it lost its luster and purity. The Divine Word, who, as the Apostle says, is a consuming fire—*Ignis consumens Deus*—invests and pervades through and through His assumed humanity, and in it all humanity that does not refuse His beneficent work; He purges it of every spot and stain and restores its pristine beauty. What work could be more worthy of Him?

The Divine Word was the light that enlighteneth every man, the light perpetually illuminating his intellect, pointing out the error to be shunned and the truth to be followed, the evil to be rejected and the good to be done; but the cloud of sin obscured this light so that men groped their way in the dark, mistaking truth for error, the unlawful for the lawful. Then the Divine Word, He who alone is worthy to be called Master—*one Master, Christ*—presented Himself to men, Himself a

[1]Catech.

man, and repeated to them in a human voice, clear and ringing, what He had always, over and over again, said to them by the light of reason and the voice of conscience, and in His goodness adding to all this the treasures of the most sublime truths. Thus He who had been their invisible master became their visible master, announcing and explaining exteriorly what He had spoken interiorly, fulfilling His office of infinite charity and combining with the duties of a perfect teacher those of a perfect physician.

Men could not be led back to God save by God Himself, by the light of truth so announced that it appealed to the senses, by word of mouth, which like a spark should light again the torch of the conscience and feed its flame. It was necessary that men, who receive truth only through the senses, should have a teacher whom they could look upon, who would speak to them through the senses, and such a one was the Man-God, the incarnate Word. But you are well aware, my friends, that the spoken word is eloquent and efficacious only when it is confirmed and backed up by deeds. A teacher who is a fluent speaker pleases us, but a teacher who, besides being a good speaker, illustrates what he says by his conduct, persuades us and constrains us to follow him. It was fitting, then, that the Teacher of mankind should add to the teaching of the word the more

powerful teaching of example, and hence it was necessary that He should be a man as we are men. Thus the divine Master fulfilled in Himself the two characters of a most perfect teacher; He taught by word and example. He preached all the virtues to the world in language the like of which was never heard before and never will be heard again: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that suffer. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are they that suffer for justice' sake. Charity is the whole law and the prophets. Forgive your enemies. Do good to them that hate and persecute you." It is not necessary to enumerate all the teaching of Christ, theoretical and practical, which has ever been a marvel to men of science. But what effect would this teaching, sublime as it is, have had on the hearts of men had not the seal of example been put upon it? Now look upon Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who puts Himself at the head of mankind; He is poor, poor of His own will, the poorest of men, so poor that he was born in a stable; He is as meek as a lamb; He suffers and dies loaded down with opprobrium, and yet He pardons; He is pre-eminently the peacemaker; He is purity and goodness itself; He is a pattern of humility and obedience, of patience and of every

virtue, but especially of those most painful and trying to our nature. Could the human race ask of Heaven a more perfect teacher than Jesus Christ? Who, then, of the sons of men may raise his voice and say: "I know not the way of truth. The way of virtue is so trying that I can not pursue it." We have only to open before him the Gospel of Jesus Christ and read to him His life. This, my friends, is the Master who teaches you by words and illustrates by example how you may be virtuous.

There are virtues which reason tells us are beautiful and which elicit the praise of men; but too frequently they demand such effort and sacrifice that our nature shrinks from them and, as if in fright, turns its back upon them. Such are humility, patience, obedience, forgiveness of offences, contempt of self, self-denial, purity, and the like. We admire them in others, but to practise them ourselves—that is quite another matter; the thought of it frightens us. But when we see Jesus Christ leading us on, when we see Him, the Man-God, teaching them and practising them with infinite perfection, who of us would confess himself overcome by fear and turn back? The battle was raging fiercely on the bridge of Arcole; victory depended on the taking of the bridge; the troops rushed upon one another with frightful impetuosity; the corpses lay in heaps on either side; vic-

tory hung uncertain in the balance, when the leader of one of the armies, seizing a banner and wildly waving it in the air, rushed to the head of his soldiers, and by voice and example encouraging them to follow him, overthrew the enemy and gained the victory. And this is what Jesus Christ does in placing Himself at the head of the human race; but could He do so were He not *man?* The Incarnation, then, of the Son of God has supplied us with what is so absolutely necessary to us, a real and perfect teacher. Take away the Incarnation, and while we should indeed have God as our teacher, He would be a teacher dwelling in the heights of heaven, far removed from us, a teacher who is not seen, whose voice is not heard, and whose works are not visible to us. We need a teacher whom we can look upon and touch, with whom we can walk, who will suffer with us, be one with us to cheer and encourage us, who, being God, can lead us on to God. The Incarnation responds to our every need, it gives us the Teacher who, being man, can adapt Himself to our weakness, and who, being God, lifts us up to the highest summits of truth and virtue.

Who among us is not ambitious to rise and be distinguished? It is an ambition, in itself good and holy, which God has put into the heart of every man, and which, rightly fostered, makes us better and more worthy. There is no man who is

not proud to say that he is the friend or relative of another who is wise, or learned, or great, or powerful, or a ruler of men. He seems, and justly, to share in the luster with which such men are clothed as with a garment. Ties of blood and friendship create, we know not how, some sort of solidarity or community of honor, greatness, and glory, which we all feel and recognize, although it is difficult to explain. Now, can human nature possibly be more gloriously ennobled and distinguished than it has been by the Incarnation of the divine Word? There is a man, a Son of Adam, a brother of ours according to the flesh, who is God! In Him and through Him we have become kinsmen, relatives of God; our poor nature has been lifted up to so great a dignity and glory that it is, as it were, immersed in the ocean of the divine Being, all-aflame with its very light, as the poet says:

> "Depicted with our effigy within itself,
> Of its own very color."[1]

The supreme end of all the works God has wrought outside Himself is His own glory, and His greatest glory is to gain the homage of the intelligence and the tribute of the love of all free creatures; for of what value in His sight is the glory that creatures, destitute of intelligence and

[1]Dante, Paradise, canto xxxiii-v, 131-132.

free will, give to God? Of no value at all, unless it is joined with that which rational creatures give Him. One single act of faith, one act of obedience and love from the lowest of rational creatures, honors God vastly more than can all the stars of heaven and all irrational creatures in the universe. The statement of this truth is its demonstration. God wants above all things else the love of man; this alone is worthy of Him. To be loved, one must love, and hence the words of the poet are true:

"Love which absolves no loved one from loving."

Love that is manifest begets love, and the greatest manifestation of love is for the lover to make himself, not only like, but equal to the one loved. By the Incarnation God, the primary, supreme, and eternal Being, not only made Himself like, but equal to man; He gave Himself wholly to him in becoming Himself a man. What a proof of love! It wholly transcends anything that man can conceive, and if on the one hand it shows how infinitely rich is God's goodness and God's wisdom, on the other hand it shows how great man is and how excellent and priceless his love.

Human nature is an incomprehensible mystery. Consider it. It has an incessant, a dominant need of the infinite; show it created beauty, goodness, and truth, it never, never says enough; it ever

demands more and more, and yet more; a thousand universes together and a thousand times more beautiful than this, would not fill its desires or satisfy its longings. It ever reaches out to the infinite, to God, with its intelligence, that craves for what is true, with its will, that yearns for what is good. But what good will this do, if man in his very nature can not see God or unite himself immediately to Him? He longs to see Him and to throw his arms about Him, and yet he can neither look upon Him nor embrace Him! What a riddle! What a mystery! The Incarnation solves the riddle and makes clear the mystery. The divine Word, the brightness of eternal light, that no mortal eyes can look upon, veils Himself in our flesh, and, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, covers Himself with our nature as with a cloud, and makes Himself accessible to us. We can approach Him and through the veil of flesh we can see in a way the uncreated light of the Word; and seeing Jesus Christ, the man, we see God, and, touching the man, we touch God, and embracing the man, we embrace God.

St. Thomas says that by the Incarnation God makes provision against our weakness in order that we may not fall into the infamy of idolatry and adore the creature instead of the Creator. Man is subject to the dominion of the senses, so that he can not conceive of spiritual things but

by the aid of images, which are themselves the creation of the senses. He needs always some sensible object and is forced to picture God Himself under sensible forms. This is why he fell into polytheism and confused the creature with the Creator and worshiped what was but the work of his hands. God pitied man and came to the aid of his weakness; He Himself became man and deigned as man to receive the adoration due to God. In this way men may with impunity follow their natural bent, which leads them to represent God under sensible forms.

Through the flesh the enemy seduced man and made him his prey; through the flesh God supplied a remedy; in and through His assumed flesh the divine Word overcame the enemy. God did as does the angler, who casts out a hook hidden by the bait; the fish swallows the bait and is taken by the hook. God hid Himself under the flesh of sin; the enemy seized it to make it his prey, but under the flesh he found the hidden God, and the plunderer became himself the prey; he who had overcome by the flesh, by the flesh was himself overcome; the remedy came from whence the poison had come, and from death issued forth life.

Again: God created men and above men angels, and distributed them in a wonderful order; these two constitute an endless army which no number can represent. They constitute a stupendous series

which from the highest of the angels goes on diminishing down to the lowliest of men. This interminable army of men and angels, forming a crown about God, the Sovereign Being, should have a head, and a head, as the Fathers say, like to themselves, who will gather them about himself and guide them on to God; a head, who, while being above them, will at the same time be of the same nature as themselves. Such in every respect is the Son of God, made man. He is God and equal to the Father and to the Holy Ghost; He has a body and in this is like to man; He has a soul and in this is like to men and angels. Since He has a body, men have in Him in time and will have for eternity a pattern that will answer to all their needs; and since He has a soul, the minds of men and of angels have in Him an object suitable to themselves; and, finally, since He is God, as St. Bonaventure and St. Augustine teach, their every aspiration will be satisfied and realized.

And again: Sacred Writ teaches us that from the beginning an enormous number of angels rebelled, fell, and were hurled into the depths of hell. Why did they rebel and fall? It is most likely that God from the very beginning revealed to the angels the mystery of the Incarnation, as it was to be accomplished in the fulness of time, and laid upon them the obligation of acknowledging and adoring His Word in human nature. They, think-

ing themselves in nature superior to Him, refused to do Him homage, and hence the fall of the angels and their ferocious hatred against Christ and the human race. The Incarnation was, then, the test to which God put the fidelity of the angels; those that acknowledged and adored Christ in human nature as their head, though this nature was inferior to theirs, were justified and confirmed in grace; the proud that refused were punished; thus an humble obedience saved the former, and rebellious pride was the undoing of the latter, who to their eternal ignominy are as a footstool under the feet of the Man-God and see the sons of Adam sitting upon their thrones. Thus the great drama of the angels in heaven and of men on earth is enacted and grouped about the mystery of the Incarnation, and the Word made flesh is the pivot around which circle all the designs of God; He is the head of men and of angels, the supreme sanctifier and glorifier of all the just and the punisher of all the wicked.

Lift up your thoughts to God; contemplate Him at that instant when, going forth from Himself, He draws the universe out of nothing by an act of His omnipotent will. Behold how under the impulse of His irresistible word, like a reflection of the divine life, created life spreads out everywhere. Behold how, like an immense wave of created being, it moves out from God and how the

boundless circle goes on increasing in heaven and on earth. Behold first of all the pure spirits come forth in an endless gradation that baffles all human count; and next comes forth man, body and spirit; and then the wave of life wanes and becomes only animal life, and then vegetable life, and then only matter; but all must return to Him from whom all came. What does God do? He sends forth His Word, the Word takes human flesh, and in it and by means of it He takes all the elements disseminated throughout the three kingdoms, the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal. Together with human flesh He takes a human soul and unites it to the Person of His Word and in it and by means of it He draws to Himself the whole universe. What a sublime and magnificent spectacle! By creation God gives being to all things and disposes outside Himself the stupendous cycles of creation, that go on decreasing in an indefinite series; by the Incarnation He takes back all things again, and draws them to Himself, each after its kind, beginning at the most remote, and then He brings about that stupendous universal recapitulation of which St. Paul speaks: *Instaurare omnia in Christo Jesu.*[1]

I will now bring this Discourse to an end by

[1]The Vulgate translates "*Instaurare,*" but the Greek text reads: "*ἀναχεσαλαίωφαται τὰ πάντα ἐν τῶχριστῶ*" which means properly *to recapitulate.*

developing as briefly as possible a thought taken from St. Thomas, and wholly worthy of him.

Fixing my mental gaze upon God, I see gathered together in Him all perfections and all of them infinite. If one may so say, one of these, namely, His goodness, seems to stand out more prominently than the others. It moves Him necessarily to communicate Himself wholly within Himself, in His inmost life, and hence the entire, necessary, and eternal communication of each Person to the others; it moves Him also to communicate Himself outside Himself, and hence creation. Can God communicate more of His goodness in creation than He actually does? Yes, He can give creatures existence, and to this existence He can add by means of grace a participation of His own image, and this, being a supernatural communication of God, is therefore much greater. But can not God, impelled by His goodness, go still further in communicating Himself? Having given creatures being and having given those capable of it His own image and a participation in His divine life, can He not, still impelled by His measureless love, which never says "enough," unite His own nature to human nature in such a way that the Person of His Son can make it His own and can say, "I and this nature are one sole being, one sole *I*"? Reason sees nothing impossible in this; nay, consider-

ing the nature of God's infinite love, it pronounces it entirely conformable to God and worthy of Him.

Now I turn my gaze on human nature, and among the endowments with which it is beautified and enriched I see in it a yearning to communicate itself and to give itself entirely when love is the motive. Impelled by love it gives itself to sons and daughters, to fathers and mothers, to husband and wife; it gives itself to its country, and impelled by love of country it gives everything, even life itself. So also impelled by love, it gives itself to God; it sacrifices everything to Him, and for Him it would give life, not once, but a thousand times. Where will this love, that impels man to give himself to a person or cause, stop? Who can say to what limits it will go? No one. It yearns for the infinite, and only in the infinite, the fountain of all truth, beauty, and goodness, will its cravings find peace. He comes from the infinite and to the infinite he must return. He is like water that rushes down the hillside only to return, if not impeded, to the heights whence it came; or like a ray of light, which reflected returns to the point of departure. God, then, in His infinite goodness came down to man and longed to unite Himself to him by the closest possible ties; man, on the other hand, in his great need of God longed also to unite himself to Him as intimately as he possible could. Why, then, should not these two,

the One impelled by love, the other by a supreme need, come together, clasp each other in an ineffable embrace, in a holy union, and form one single individual, one single Person, who would say, "I am God—I am man"? This ineffable embrace, this holy union, which human reason dimly anticipated, has come about; it took place at the instant in which, as faith teaches, the Word was made man: *And the Word was made flesh.* The divine Word, by virtue from on high, having taken flesh in the spotless womb of the Virgin, immediately united it to His Person; and then was the abyss between earth and heaven bridged over, a man, a son of Adam, was God, and God, the Son of God, was man, and by this tie, the closest of all ties, a tie that shall not be loosed for all ages to come, not only was all humanity, but together with it all creation, united forever with God.

I have frequently stood on a summer's morning at the foot of the Alps; the sky was serene, the air tranquil, the proud peaks of those mountains, like silent giants, rose majestically one behind the other. Suddenly the highest of these peaks is suffused with purple, the light of the sun shines on it, and it seems to glow like a great flame of fire. The sun invests that topmost peak and it is reflected on the peaks below, and we in the valley receive the benefit of this reflection. This is a faint image of the feast we celebrate to-day. The

divine Word rests upon the vertex, upon the head of humanity, the assumed human nature, unites it to Himself in the unity of Person, and thence radiates His light, pours out His heat, and diffuses His divine life in heaven and on earth. With the shepherds let us bend the knee, bow the head and adore Him.[1]

[1]All these observations concerning the fitness of the Incarnation are taken from various places in the two Summas of St. Thomas, and the writings of the Fathers, cited by Patavius (bk. ii, c. 6-12), Suarez (D. iii, sec. 3), Felix, Ventura, Monsabré, and others.

I had intended to state and solve some of the difficulties, but was dissuaded from doing so because of the length of the Discourse. I will merely touch on them in passing.

It is said: "There is an abyss between God and creation, between the infinite and the finite. Therefore it is impossible that the Incarnation should bind them by the closest of ties."

This would also prove that creation is impossible and also Providence, and we should be driven to admit the absurdity that matter is eternal. How does the spirit communicate with the body? Distance has no limits, so neither have the relations between time and eternity, between the mutable and the immutable, and yet we must admit these.

Again it is said: "The majesty of God, His eternity, immensity and His other divine attributes, are inconsistent with the Incarnation."

The same answer may be given; creation and a superintending Providence must be denied. Nay, the goodness of God demands this last manifestation. In the Incarnation God does not lower Himself, He lifts up what is lowly; God does not change, but a new relation is established; God does not shut Himself up in the assumed humanity, but this is lifted up into union with Him. If the body does not shut up the soul in itself, how does the humanity of Christ shut up in itself His divinity?

I omit other objections of the same kind; any one wishing to find the solution of them may read the first part of the 34th Conference of Monsabré translated by me.

DISCOURSE II

Why the Incarnation Took Place in the Fulness of Time

"IN THE forty-second year of the reign of Cæsar Augustus, the world being wholly at peace, Jesus Christ, God from all eternity, the Son of the Eternal Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, the nine months being now accomplished, God made man was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Juda." In these words does the Church to-day in her Martyrology announce to the whole world the birth of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. The words are taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, or I should rather say, they are but a repetition of those addressed by the angel to the shepherds: "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."[1]

Strange language this, my friends. How simple! How quiet, sublime, majestic! When the birth of the first-born of a king or monarch, of one who will hold in his hands the destinies of an empire or kingdom, is announced to the people, it

[1]Luke ii. 11, 12.

is done in studied phrase and choicest language, in resounding words and striking metaphors; and yet the grave may be near the cradle of that child; he may go through the world unknown; he may be the scourge of the people, who hail him as their hope and salvation; or they may yet drive him out from them and force him to seek safety in exile. The Church, in announcing the birth of this child, in whom are realized the desires and yearnings of the centuries that went before Him, in whom are centered the hopes of the human race, who gathers about Himself the past, the present, and the future, makes her own the words of the Gospel, than which none could be more simple and modest: "This day Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Juda."

And now, my friends, what thoughts are yours? When we reflect that Jesus Christ, the Saviour, came among us so many hundreds of years after the fall of Adam,[1] and that so many generations passed while the world was either yearning for His coming or was wholly ignorant that He was to come, receiving no sort of benefit from it, a distressing doubt comes into the mind: "Why did God put off for so long the work of our redemp-

[1]It is commonly said and held even at this day that 4,000 years intervened between Adam and Christ. The Church has pronounced no judgment on this point and she allows a certain liberty of opinion. Modern archæological studies require that this period shall be made longer and with some Catholic writers we may without being rash extend it to ten or twelve thousand years.

tion? If this is, as faith teaches and as we firmly believe, pre-eminently a work of divine love, and if, as St. Ambrose says, love bides no delay, why did He make us wait through so long an interval of time for our liberation? Why was He deaf to the passionate prayers of so many souls crying out to Him? Why, when the first man fell and while he was there trembling and sobbing before Him, did He not reach out a merciful hand? Why did He not at once make Himself man and by the Incarnation immediately lift up the fallen offspring of Adam? Would He not have anticipated countless evils and made His benevolence more complete?"

Certainly He would have done so, this no one doubts. His love impelled Him to do it, and since He did not do it there must certainly have been weighty and profound reasons for so long putting off the accomplishment of the mystery. What were these weighty and profound reasons that retarded the mystery of the Incarnation? I shall endeavor to point them out to you, and you will, I trust, try to make them your own.

What are the reasons why God willed to put off for so many centuries carrying into effect that mystery of love, the Incarnation? The answer to this question is not easy, but fortunately we have a good guide in St. Thomas, and we shall follow him, assured that in so doing we shall not go astray.

The holy Doctor asks if it was fitting that the Word of God should have made Himself man in the beginning and he does not hesitate to answer in the negative, and for this he gives three reasons, which we shall endeavor to set before you.

What was the root of the first sin, and hence the fatal root out of which sprung and still spring all other sins? It was pride, and this is taught by Holy Writ and confirmed by reason: *"Ye shall be as Gods"* is the lying and impious promise which the first man believed and which led him to rise in rebellion against his Maker. What is sin? It is the disobedience of the creature to his God, and disobedience is the birth of pride. Now the medicine must be of a nature contrary to that of the evil it is intended to cure. Pride is broken by being humiliated, and it was therefore necessary that fallen man should feel and know the absolute need he had of a divine liberator, should, as it were, touch with his hand his own weakness and impotence, and should himself ask for the Physician to cure him and raise him to his pristine greatness.[1]

It is the old story of all the falls that have been and are and will be—pride and haughtiness of

[1] Nec etiam statim post peccatum conveniens fuit Deum incarnari. Primo quidem propter conditionem humani peccati, quod ex superbia provenerat. Unde eo modo erat homo liberandus, ut humiliatus recognosceret se liberatore indigere . . . ut ita sua infirmitate clamaret ad medicum et gratiae quaereret auxilium (P. R. C. I., art. 5).

heart. We are full of ourselves, trusting in our own strength; we will brook neither law nor authority that makes us feel our own dependence; we think we are sufficient for ourselves and we will be absolute masters of our own conduct in word and deed; like the Titans in the fable, we would scale the very heavens; we all bear within us under a thousand disguises the echo of those terrible words of the seduced: *Ye shall be as Gods.*

And if, my friends, the Son of God, the Physician and Liberator of the human race, had come on earth immediately after the first fall, how would any one ever have known the depth to which the race had fallen by sin or the greatness of the benefit received? Human nature was still there apparently whole and entire, full of life and strong with the strength of youth. True, it had lost the greatest of gifts, grace and the friendship of God; but these were invisible gifts, the worth of which could not be appreciated; it had lost the knowledge of divine things, immunity from sorrow or pain, and the mastery over its passions, but it could not understand the consequence of such loss; it had lost the gift of immortality and was subject to death, but what did death mean, and what was pain? What was meant by the rebellion and the tyranny of the passions? And what did ignorance imply? Man in that first period could not as much as form to himself an

idea of these frightful evils and chastisements and, as a consequence, of sin, which was the cause of them. Man then knew only what life was, the joy of innocence, the love of the true and the good, the happiness of being his own master; the evils inflicted by God were something of which he had no knowledge; they were known only confusedly and the future alone would clearly reveal them. My friends, did you know what pain is before you felt its sting? Did you know what it is to lose father or mother or dear friend before you had actual experience of the loss? Did you know what the struggle of life means before you found yourself actually in the thick of it? Let us freely avow it, in our infancy, childhood, and youth, either we knew nothing of all this, or we knew it very imperfectly; experience, and experience alone, gave us a knowledge of it and goes on day by day making that knowledge fuller, so that frequently we find ourselves, as life is drawing to a close, sorrowfully exclaiming: "Never would I have believed that the trials of life were so many and so painful! Now I know the vanity of all things."

My friends, there is a life of the individual, and a life of a society and of the human race. The practical knowledge of the former may be had in a cycle of fifty, sixty, or eighty years; a practical knowledge of the latter requires centuries, and

many tens of centuries. The primitive fall was the fall of the whole human race; it was therefore necessary that the entire human race should learn by a long and bitter experience how great was its fall, how tremendous the consequences of it, how extreme its wretchedness, how enormous the benefit of its restoration. The inexorable teaching of facts must be the commentary on the divine condemnation, must break down the pride of the sons of Adam and prepare them to receive as they should the divine Restorer. The human race is the prodigal son and God is his loving Father; God is pained to see him set out from his home, proud and insolent, bearing with him the share of his patrimony that fell to him, but He respects his liberty, even when it is being abused, and permits him to depart. He knows that he will squander his inheritance to the last cent and be reduced to the utmost beggary, but He knows also that, learning wisdom from experience and forced to appease his hunger with the food of unclean animals, he will return humbled and penitent and be again His much-loved son.

And now take a look at the race of man as it goes forth from the abode of delights, from the home of God, its Father. It still carries with it a rich heritage of truth concerning God, its own end, its conduct, and its duties toward the Creator, toward its brothers and its kind. Nothing is

wanting to it to enable it to live uprightly; it has reason, clouded indeed, but still ample; it has free will, weakened to be sure, but yet sufficiently strong; it carries with it, too, the hope, received from the mouth of God, of a Redeemer to come; and thus equipped it sets out upon its wanderings over the face of the earth. Let us follow this prodigal son.

Observe it after a thousand, two thousand, three thousand years, in the various halting places on its journey from north to south, from east to west. Ask it what it has done with the precious heritage it bore away with it, when it set out from the home of its Father. My God, it has wasted its substance living riotously; it has devoured all its goods consorting with harlots![1] It has lost all idea of God, of His nature, wisdom, and liberty, of his justice and His perfections; it has confounded Him with His creatures and bent the knee to the most loathsome idols and poured out torrents of its brothers' blood upon its altars. Every passion, even the most filthy, has been personified in a divinity and vice has usurped the place of virtue; laws the most sacred, engraven by nature herself on the heart of man, have been profaned, rejected, utterly spurned; oppression has been dignified into right, slavery has been sanctioned by law, homicide made lawful when

[1]Luke xv, 13-30.

perpetrated for the diversion of others, pillage, rapine, and the most brutal violence have been made to pass under the name of justice. The world has been flooded with nameless crimes, and any one who has read the story of the Pagan world knows that this is not by any means too strong a term to use. Nor is this all. The evils and the disorders that inundated the earth were not by any means the greatest and the most far-reaching; there was still a deeper depth. There have been, there are, and there ever will be evils, disorders, and crimes, but the uttermost depth of perversion, beyond which it is not possible to go another step, is that of wholly obliterating the supreme principles of truth and justice, mistaking the false for the true, and the unjust for the just.

As long as there continues luminous in any society, even the most corrupt, the light of great principles, theoretical and practical, a remedy for even the greatest evils is not wanting; these stand there as a protest against the waywardness of the passions, as a beacon pointing the way to the harbor of safety. When these are wholly eclipsed all hope is gone, the darkness is complete, and crimes become a necessity. To this depth was the human race sunk even in countries where literature, the arts, and sciences had shone with the greatest splendor, and seemed to have reached their highest perfection. It groped through densest dark-

ness, ignorant of its origin, of its end and the means to attain it, like one shipwrecked in mid-ocean, or like a wayfarer lost in the interminable forests, described by Stanley, where a ray of light never enters.

What, then, has the human race to say for itself? I see rising everywhere along its course stupendous monuments of its material power, of its genius in arts and letters; but where are its creations in the field of intellectual and moral truth, which constitute the real greatness and glory of man? Whither have its great and wise men led us? What have its noblest representatives to say for themselves? After having traversed every road, explored all the secrets of science, interrogated the past, the present, and the future, and summoned to their aid talents the most acute, intellects the most powerful, and made most daring flights, they are still undecided about everything; discouraged, confused, and almost ashamed, I hear them uttering such doleful words as these: "We must await a messenger from heaven to teach us how we are to regulate our conduct as regards both God and man."[1] Again: "The Holy One will come from the West; He will know all things."[2] "The Mediator, the conqueror of darkness, our liberator, will come of a virgin."[3] All

[1]Plato and Alcibiades.
[2]Confucius.
[3]The Persians.

ancient tradition from China to Mexico, from Scandinavia to Egypt, speaks of a future liberator, of a teacher that is to come and be the guide of men. This universal hope is, as others have said, the polar star of the nations. Others again, and among them the greatest thinkers, utter words of discouragement, and I had almost said of desperation, telling us that it is impossible by our unaided powers to arrive at the knowledge of truth, adding that everything is uncertain, that it is the part of wisdom to doubt of everything, and that after long efforts the most we can do is to gain a probability of the knowledge of truth. Now all these facts, all these solemn avowals of peoples and of their greatest geniuses, go to prove that the divine teaching has produced its fruits; the human race, by the mouth of its teachers, bows its proud head, avows publicly its own wretchedness and impotence, humbles itself, and ends by asking aid of Heaven. It has paved the way for the Saviour to come and has shown that the retarding of the Incarnation was a divinely wise forethought.[1]

Again the Angel of the Schools says: "It was fitting that the Incarnation should be put off in

[1]Eusebius of Cæsarea and others said that God put off the Incarnation in order that the human race by growing better might be prepared to receive Him; St. Thomas and others teach that God put off the Incarnation in order that men going from bad to worse might come to know the need of the Saviour. The two opinions coalesce into one, since the depravity into which the human race had fallen gave men a clear knowledge of the root of their wretchedness, and led them to the cure of it by the medicine of humility.

order that progress might be made toward good. This progress always begins with the imperfect and goes on to the perfect.'"[1]

Look round about upon all created things in the heavens and on the earth and upon all the works of men, and you will discover that, without a single exception, all are subject to this sovereign law. They begin in a state of imperfection and then develop and progress toward the perfection proper to the nature of each. Wherever you find this order broken in upon, you may say at once that the law of nature has been violated, that God Himself has intervened, and you may frankly affirm: "Here is a miracle."

God in the beginning created all matter, terrestrial and celestial; it was a confused mass without form. The forces latent in that huge mass began to become active and to exert their energies, and in the course of millions and millions of years the earth was formed and the suns and stars that shine out in the depths of the heavens. The earth thrust its head above the waves of the ocean, first vegetable and then animal life appeared, and when all things were in readiness God brought man upon the earth as its king.

Look at the tree that now defies the storms; it has grown up from a small seed. Look at the bird

[1] "Secundo propter promotionem in bonum, secundum quem ab imperfecto ad perfectum proceditur. . . . Non prius quod spiritale est, sed, quod animale, deinde quod est spiritale." (Ibid.)

that goes singing through the spaces of the air; it came forth from a little egg and was once small and without feathers. Look at the lion, at whose roaring all the beasts of the forest tremble; it was once an embryo in its mother's womb, then a cub and waxed strong slowly by feeding on milk.

Look at man, whose strong arm turns up the sod and reins in the fiery steed; he was once a babe, and his mother, holding him by the hand, taught him to take his first steps. Look at the man of learning, who securely maps out the whole field of science and scatters the light of knowledge in his way; he was first a child sitting upon a bench in school and learning to lisp the letters of the alphabet. Thus it is everywhere. All beings animate and inanimate, great and small, corporeal and incorporeal or spiritual, in all time and of every form begin from the imperfect and mount toilsomely up the ladder of perfection, each after its kind. All you men begin, every one of you, your work from below and thence rise to the top; you begin with the imperfect and go on to the perfect, from the marble you draw forth the statue, from the silkworm's thread you weave the magnificent cloth that will adorn the shoulders of a queen.

To this majestic and universal law, that governs the universe, that produces beauty and or-

der, God also subjected the fact of the Incarnation, the fixed term of His wisdom.

How many pitiless evolutions took place upon this earth before God introduced into it the first Adam? The depths of the sea were changed into continents, and continents were submerged in the sea. The labor of centuries buried in the bowels of the earth the boundless forests that are now our wealth, and upon colossal strata deposited as time went on other colossal strata, and upon the giant ruins of other worlds prepared and deposited this, which was necessary to man.

God did in like manner before introducing into the world the second Adam, the restorer of the first. He did not make ready the physical world, for of this there was little or no need, but He made ready the *moral* world, and this was assuredly necessary. I beg you here not to lose sight of a fundamental law, too often not taken into account, namely, that in arranging the web of His providence and leading men on to the fulfilment of His designs, God always makes use of the agency of men themselves. In the same way He governs and develops the intellectual and moral world by the concurrence of men themselves, and hence the work goes on slowly, progressively, is at times broken off and then taken up and begun again; and the upheavals themselves, the disasters political, social, and religious, under the

molding hand of God and of man, become fruitful for good and serve to build up new and more splendid structures.

The sons of Adam increased, formed families, tribes, and peoples; little by little they grew in number, spread and carried their tents into distant lands and peopled the earth. They bore with them everywhere the hope of a Saviour to come, the primitive ideas of a God, of a future life, and of the natural duties. Time, ignorance, the passions, and a hundred other causes obscured and disfigured these precious germs of fundamental truth; still they abided like roots and seed half buried under the fallen earth of a crumbling and disintegrating mountain, which often after long intervals of time spring into new life.

Finally, God chose among the nations, scattered over the face of the globe, that had sadly marred, if not wholly lost, the sacred heritage of primitive hopes and truths, one family, the family of Abraham, and of it formed a people that will ever be the marvel of the world. In that family He kindled again the sacred fire of the ancient traditions, and there He preserved it by the prophets and the Law and by the series of miracles of which history has left us the record. Then He dispersed this people throughout the Orient, into Chaldea, into Media and Persia; they spread along the banks of the Nile, throughout Greece, at Rome,

and along the shores of the Mediterranean. These children of Abraham bore with them the seed of the ancient promise and of primeval truth, and as they spread everywhere they everywhere revived, at least in a measure, the memory of the primitive hope. The children of Israel dispersed throughout the East and the West were like those small seeds that the wind bears on its wings into far-away countries, and which falling spring into life and bear fruit. It is ever Providence preparing the way for Him who is to come. The people increased in number, went to war, one overcame another and rose in great strength upon its ruins; then it also grew old, fell, and became the pedestal for another. Thus the Chaldean Empire gave place to the Assyrian, the Assyrian to that of the Medes and Persians, the Persian to that of the Greeks, and the Greeks to that of the Romans, who overcame and absorbed them all. They were like geological strata, one laid in regular order upon another, and all a preparation for the abode of man. In the commingling of different and dissimilar races material civilization progressed, barbarians were reclaimed and refined, reason was disciplined and polished, peoples approached nearer to one another, travel by land and sea was facilitated, one language became universal, first the Greek, then the Roman, one code of law made all brothers and molded all into one people; at

Alexandria and Antioch, at Athens and above all at Rome, the East and the West were united, the ideas and the Sacred Books of the Hebrews were translated into the language of Homer and became familiar to the Greek world. The patriarchs, the prophets, and the Mosaic Law had prepared the way in Israel; the children of Israel dispersed throughout the Gentile world had kindled some of the smoldering embers of the ancient faith; Nebuchadonosor, Darius, Cyrus, Alexander, and Cæsar, by transforming the ancient world, reducing it to some sort of unity, and making possible intercourse between people and people, had hastened the time and smoothed the way for the coming of the second Adam, who was to unite in one family all the sons of men and to set up a kingdom that would live for all time and extend over all space.

And now, O Son of God, enter into the world; now is the fulness of time, everything in the house of Israel is made ready, and in the tents of Sem and Japhet the work of ages, the labor of preparation is complete; men unconsciously executed Thy designs, prepared and embellished Thy dwelling-place. Enter and take possession. And He came: *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*

Allow me to present this truth under another and most beautiful figure. Nature, says Tertul-

lian, is a great book written by the hand of God, and anticipates the Gospel. Let us open and read it.

Note that seed which the husbandman has cast into the earth. It shows signs of life, thrusts its head above the soil, and its delicate blade rises up toward the sky. Day by day it grows, waxes strong, puts forth leaves, extends its branches, increases in size and vigor, and in ten or twenty years is transformed into a stately tree. Not until it has arrived at fulness of life and strength do you see a flower upon its branches, and after the flower comes the fruit, its crown and glory. This, says Tertullian, is an image of humanity, which was in germ in Adam, flowered and bore fruit in Christ, the token and evidence of the full development of its forces. Flower and fruit are not the accompaniments of infancy and childhood, nor do they honor old age and decrepitude; but youth is the meridian splendor of life in the natural order, and it became the Son of God, the flower and fruit of renewed humanity, to appear, not in the beginning or at the end of ages, but in the midst, in the fulness of time, in its maturity, as the Sacred Writings say, *In the fulness of time.*

And now let us go again to the feet of St. Thomas and reverently listen to his words. "Because of the dignity of the divine Word it was

not fitting that He should come in the beginning of time, since, as St. Augustine says, the greater the grandeur of the expected Restorer, the longer should be the series of those who go before Him to announce His coming.'"[1]

My friends, say that we are without the gates of a capital city, through which a monarch is about to enter to take possession of his kingdom, which of right belongs to him and to which he is welcomed by the resounding shouts of an entire people, who look to him for freedom, order, greatness, and safety. Before us pass several battalions of infantry, companies of cavalry, and lines of artillery, flags and banners are proudly floating in the air; then come generals, their uniforms gleaming with gold and silver; next the supreme magistrates and ministers of state, decked out in pomp and splendor befitting their office and dignity; and last of all, attracting all eyes to himself, the monarch; and the greater his power and majesty the greater also will be the magnificence of the cortège that precedes him.

The same should take place when the Monarch of monarchs, the Son of God, enters into the world.

First of all the patriarchs go before Him; they outline Him in figures, trace His lineaments, and

[1]Tertio, propter dignitatem Verbi incarnati . . . Quanto maior judex veniebat tanto longior praeconum series praecedere debebat. (Ibid.)

announce Him. Then comes the Mosaic priesthood; and with rites and sacrifices and symbols constantly keep Him before the minds of the people. Next come the prophets, one after another; one determines His family, another points out the place of His birth, another counts up the years to pass before He comes, another tells us that His mother is to be a virgin, another celebrates His knowledge, another describes His virtues, another foretells His miracles, another depicts His sufferings and death, another sings of His resurrection and of His triumphs. For more than a thousand years, at fitting intervals, they pass before the eyes of the people after the manner of heralds always crying out: "Prepare! He comes, He comes!" This cry finds an echo in the ancient traditions of all peoples and resounds from end to end of the known world, a cry and an echo that went on spreading and growing in strength and clearness as the times matured and the *Expected* of nations approached. What a grand and majestic spectacle! How great and how beautiful is the wisdom manifest in the disposition of the various parts of the magnificent picture that is unfolded before our eyes from Adam to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to Isaias, from Isaias to the Precurser! The long and numerous lines of patriarchs and prophets, the echoes of the world-wide traditions outside Israel, which filled

eighty and it may be a hundred centuries, delineate that sublime figure of the great *Expected* and give His history in advance.

He is the sun which, while still in the boundless spaces below the horizon, sends forth his rays into our heaven; first pale, then white, then brilliant, then rosy, then as living gold, and finally bursts upon us in a blazing flame just on the extreme edge of the firmament. All these years of waiting, all these figures and symbols, shadowing Him forth, that long procession of forerunners and heralds, these empires that rise and fall and mysteriously prepare the world for One that will absorb them all, all these ardent longings, welling up from millions of breasts and in ways most various calling upon the Prince of peace, the Father of the age to come, the Saviour, tell us who He is and how His glory must fill the world. The greater the judge who is to come, the longer will be the line of heralds going before him.

My friends, there are two comings of the Son of God upon earth; the first is that which we commemorate this day, which took place in the womb of a virgin, of whom He was born in Bethlehem: *He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, and He was made man.* In this coming the Son of God came upon the earth as man, and as St. Thomas says, gave Himself to the whole human race; this coming took place but

once, was visible, and is the groundwork and cause of our salvation. There is a second coming, invisible, spiritual, which takes place in each one of us by faith and charity, which is the fruit of the first and of which St. Paul speaks, when he says: "Christ dwells in our hearts in charity," and of which Jesus Christ Himself says: "I and the Father will come and take our abode within him," that is, in him who believes and faithfully keeps the law. This coming of Christ in each of us is begun by faith and completed by charity that goes out in deeds. He comes and dwells in us by His grace, stamping upon us His likeness, diffusing in us His life, and uniting Himself to us in such a way, that both He and we form but one, according to the words: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit," "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." The first, or visible, without the second coming avails nothing; it is like food on the table which is not eaten; in order that it may nourish and restore out strength each must take of it and eat it and make it one with himself.

We have seen that the first coming of Jesus Christ took place when the world was properly prepared to receive Him; similarly the second coming takes place in each of us when we are prepared to give Him a welcome. And how did the world prepare for His coming? By avowing that

it had need of Him, by humbling itself and confessing its wretchedness, by calling upon Him and reviving its hopes in Him, by listening to His prophets and preparing His way, and by all the works enumerated above, accomplished both in Israel itself and outside it. So also must each of us prepare for the coming of the Saviour in spirit into our hearts. We must revive, make live again our faith and hope, rekindle our charity toward God and our neighbor, cleanse our minds and hearts, and avow that we need divine aid. We must by prayer and by passionate appeals go forth to meet Our Saviour, open our hearts to Him, begging Him to come to us and be spiritually born again in our souls, that growing into His likeness here below we may be worthy to share His glory in heaven.

DISCOURSE III

Jesus Christ Lives and is Known before His Birth

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem . . . to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife. . . . And it came to pass that when they were there her days were accomplished that she should be delivered, and she brought forth her first-born, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (*Luke* ii. 4-7).

In these few words the evangelist St. Luke narrates the great mystery, hidden for ages, the birth of the Son of God according to the flesh, which the Church to-day and at all times keeps in mind and joyfully celebrates. And note that St. Luke alone narrates this great fact and very briefly adverts to details, which, had the sacred writer not left us a record of them, we should have thought impossible. How simple is the recital and how straightforward! How sparing he is in the use of words! With this recital, which as children we so often heard at our mother's knees, the story of the Gospel opens, that is, the story of the redemption of

the human race and of modern civilization. From this most simple narrative the greatest poets and sculptors, painters and musicians have drawn their sublimest inspiration; in it pious and believing souls have in every age found treasures of faith and love and an inexhaustible fountain of celestial and divine delight, and countless multitudes of the suffering and sorrowful their best comfort and solace.

Let us, my friends, meditate upon the birth of Jesus Christ as it is revealed by St. Luke. Judging by the world's standard, can anything more humble, poorer, and more piteous be imagined? I think not.

There is the Mother, a poor young virgin from an obscure village in a corner of Galilee, who in obedience to the decree of a Pagan emperor, in the depth of winter, over bad and rough roads, makes a journey of fifty miles on foot to Bethlehem. Her companion, her spouse, is an humble tradesman. Though they are descendants of David not a hospitable door is open to them. Yonder is a cave, a stable; in it they seek shelter and there the Son of God and of a virgin, the Saviour of the world, is born. A stable is His royal palace, a manger is His throne, and His kingly robes are the few rags in which He is wrapped. It is a story which, it should seem, the evangelist for the honor of the Son of God ought to have left untold

or to have disguised, but which on the contrary he wished to relate for all coming generations and which to-day is solemnly sung in thousands and thousands of temples and in nearly every tongue on the globe.

My friends, looking at it in the light of human reason the birth of Jesus Christ is but the birth of a poor babe, the birth of a man, and the lowliest of men, for no poverty and feebleness could be greater than His; and yet the birth of Jesus Christ, as narrated in the Gospel, is the birth of the Man-God, than which nothing could be greater or more amazing. This is the subject of my Discourse, and you shall judge if in what I have said I have in the least exaggerated.

A man is born; alone, trembling, unable to walk a step or speak a word he enters upon the threshold of life; his first accent is a wail, a cry. This is true of all the sons of Adam, without a single exception, it matters not where born, on the steps of a throne or in the poorest hovel in the depths of the forest. Here is a babe that has just opened his eyes to the light of day; put him carefully into his cradle, look upon him, study him, and tell me what will be his future? Will he be great? Will he be insignificant? Will he be a genius? Will he be an imbecile? Will he be virtuous or vicious? Will his days be few or many? Will he leave a name behind him or will he pass through the world un-

known to all? What will be his future? It would be folly to attempt to give an answer. God alone reads the book of the future of every man; He alone sees all his ways. How often have the fond presages and forecasts of men over the cradle of a babe been belied by events; how often have they excited the derision of the world! Behind the babe there is nothing, before him only the unknown. Before he was born he had done nothing and could do nothing, because he was nothing, and from nothing only nothing can come. He is born; that is all. He has not as yet so much as written a page of his life. How then could you read it? All is silent, all is mystery.

Call up the shades of David or Alexander, of Cæsar, Charles the Great, or Napoleon; gaze upon them in their cradles. Who could possibly unfold before you the canvas upon which their marvelous lives and deeds are pictured?

Every one could and must say, "A man is born"; what he will be or what he will accomplish is God's secret. There never was and there never will be a man born into the world who has had or will have a history before his birth, or whose life has been or will be known before it is begun.

But it is not so with the Babe of Bethlehem, with the Son of the Virgin, who is born to us to-day. He appears to-day upon the earth, but before being born He existed and lived in the expec-

tation and in the yearnings of the whole human race. To-day He enters upon the theater of life, but for ages upon ages He has been known, invoked, and adored, as if, I had almost said, He were living. We knew for eight, fifteen, thirty, forty centuries that He was to come, where He was to be born, who would be His mother, the time when He was to appear, and we knew in advance the most interesting particulars of His life.

At the foot of Libanus, on the banks of the Jordan, there lived a people, the most remarkable of all the peoples that have ever dwelt upon the earth; it came from the shores of the Euphrates, it went a pilgrim into Egypt, then it set up its tents in the land of Canaan. Tossed to and fro as a ship by the billows of the ocean, dispersed by its more powerful neighbors, by a prodigy solitary in all history it preserved and still preserves its personality; it did not commingle with the peoples who conquered and scattered it; it alone preserved a faith in one God and with this faith it preserved the law of what is just and honest. Its memories and its traditions run back uncorrupted to the very cradle of the human family.

What is the basis of its faith? What is the root of its traditions? What is the central idea about which all its hopes and all its religion are grouped? The coming of a Saviour, of a Liberator, not of Israel alone, but of the whole human

race. In the beginning of time, when man first fell, the voice of God was heard uttering this promise: "Of a woman will come one who will crush the enemy's head." And prophets and peoples century after century faithfully echoed this divine voice, and as time went on it extended over a wider range and became more clear and explicit. The promise made in the beginning to the whole human race was restricted later on and fixed on Abraham and Isaac; in their descendants all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and Jacob before going to his grave blessed his twelve sons and most solemnly declared that the Desired of the nations should come of the family of Juda: "*The expectation of the nations.*" Moses, David, and the prophets all speak of Him, all promise Him in God's name, all point Him out, as it were, with the finger. They determine the nation, that of Israel, to which He shall belong; they determine the tribe, that of Juda; they determine the family, that of David. Isaias sees His virgin Mother and exclaims: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and His name shall be called Emmanuel," that is, the Man-God, the Prince of peace, God of the ages to come. And when will He come? When the scepter passes from the hand of Juda and into the hand of a stranger; when, as Daniel says, from the day on which the building of the Temple was announced, seventy weeks

of years shall have gone by; when, as Aggeus says, the second Temple will still be standing and will receive Him, who will make this last house more glorious than the first.

And where will He be born? Micheas replies: "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall come forth the ruler of Israel, whose going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."

What will be His rank and condition? He shall be of the house of David; He shall be poor, despised, rejected of His people, humbled, as one stricken by Heaven, a leper.

What will be His intellectual character? He will be the Master and Teacher of nations; through Him the Law will go forth from Sion and be spread over all the earth; in Him will be the hope of all peoples.

What will be His moral character? He will not cry out nor have respect to persons, neither will His voice be heard abroad; the bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not extinguish. He will preach the Gospel to the poor and heal the contrite of heart; He will pray for the guilty; He will be the Just One, the Saint of saints; He will reconcile sinners with God and give Himself to be put to death for their sake.

What will be His life and death? He will preach peace and the kingdom of Heaven to all;

He will give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the speechless; He will cleanse lepers, make the lame to walk and recall the dead to life; He will be hated of men, reviled and persecuted; a disciple will betray Him and sell Him for thirty pieces of silver; He will be handed over to His enemies, beaten and torn with scourges until He is unrecognizable; He will be crowned with thorns, cuffed, spit upon, nailed to the Cross and given vinegar and gall to drink; He will die on the Cross, be buried, and rise the third day. And this is the story of the life of Jesus Christ which the prophets one by one went on weaving for a period of 2000 years before He was born; a story the more stupendous and humanly speaking the more incredulous, since it was the work, not of one or two, but of above thirty writers, who never saw one another, did not know one another, and were scattered along the great highway of the ages from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to Zachary and Malachy, in the desert, in Chaldea and Media.

Nor is this all. This wonderful people, who from the Euphrates passed over to the shores of the Nile and from the shores of the Nile to the banks of the Jordan, and thence again to the Euphrates, and once more back to the Jordan, had a priesthood and a law and a religion, the rites of which were minutely determined. What does

this religion say in its figures and symbols, its rites and sacrifices? In its rites and sacrifices it repeats in language the most eloquent and expressive what its prophets announce by word of mouth; year by year, month by month, and day by day it confirms in a hundred ways the faith of the elect people in a Restorer to come; it foreshadows His life, represents His office, describes His works.

If the prophets in their writings portray in advance the story of the Messias, the Hebrew priesthood and religion, by their rites and sacrifices, continually describe Him and represent Him to the people. And here is a fact worthy of being noted, namely, that the work of delineating and representing the promised Saviour was progressive and went on slowly. There was first only a rude sketch, so to say; then as time went on the lines of the divine countenance began to appear, and finally the perfect form stood out, so that when He should appear on earth men would be forced to cry out: "It is He!" The portrait drawn of Him before He came is perfect.

Now let us leave this small but wonderful people, dwelling on the great highway that connects the valley of Egypt with the valley of the Euphrates and the Ganges, the point, as it were, where the three ancient continents come together. If the hope and the promise of a future Saviour

of the world really fell from the mouth of God and was religiously treasured up by the first man it should be the common heritage of all peoples and should be found at the basis of all their beliefs.

This is a consequence of the unity of the human race. When the sons of the first man became themselves heads of families, and families became tribes, and tribes nations, in spreading over the face of the earth they should have carried with them their primitive memories and especially those of the great promise, that of a Redeemer to come, with which were bound up their dearest and most sacred hopes. That promise, that hope, might be marred and confused and partly obliterated, but to obliterate it wholly was impossible. We ought, therefore, to find it scattered among all peoples, and if we brush away the accumulated dust of ages we shall discover at least traces of it in the oral traditions, the writings, and the monuments that remain to us. This clear, precise, unfailing hope is luminous among the chosen people of God, because He marvelously preserved it; in other peoples we find it mutilated, obscured, and disfigured by time, ignorance, and a hundred other agencies; but if we allow a ray of light, still brilliant in Israel, to fall upon it we shall have no difficulty in discovering its vestiges and its broad outlines. China, India, Persia,

Egypt, Greece, and Rome are the countries that represent the past, that gather up into themselves all known history, and in which all religious traditions are embodied. China, which has been fitly compared to an embalmed mummy wrapped about with silk, and covered with hieroglyphics, which lies on the extreme border of the Orient, almost wholly isolated from the rest of the human family, furnishes us by the mouth of her greatest man, the representative of all her learning, these memorable words: "I, Confucius, have heard it said that in the country of the West will rise a holy man, who will do an ocean of meritorious works. He will be sent of Heaven and will have all power on earth."[1]

India, that immense region lying between the Himalayas and the ocean, where all seems immobile, is a land in which sacred traditions are jealously preserved. The Brahmins, seated on the banks of the Ganges and Brahmaputra and absorbed in contemplation, murmur mysterious prayers. What are they asking of Heaven? They ask ceaselessly for the coming of an unknown person, who shall give back to man his innocence of heart and to their country its glory and happiness. And who is this personage? It is *Vishnu,* who, having successively passed through eight incarnations, is to manifest himself

[1]Abel Remusat, The Invariable Means, pp. 144, 145.

in the ninth under the form of a man and repair all the evil caused by *Siva,* the wicked spirit of destruction.

Traveling toward the west we come upon Persia, another cradle of venerable traditions. Evil had sunk deep into the heart of man. The principle of darkness, *Ahriman,* had introduced war and every evil into the world; the principle of light, *Ormuzd,* combated him and manifested himself under the form of *Mithras,* the mediator. He overcame *Ahriman* and freed men from the dominion of evil. Is not this the Hebrew belief in a future restoration, the names being scarcely, if at all, changed?

Let us now turn to Egypt, where the Pharaohs lie buried at the foot of the pyramids, erected some centuries before Moses. What do we learn from the traditions and symbols of this country on whose front is written the word "mystery"? The world was innocent and happy; a wicked spirit, the serpent *Typhon,* flooded it with evils; but *Horus,* the son of *Isis* and *Osiris,* appeared on the earth, crushed the serpent's head, and restored peace and happiness. The basis of these traditions is always the fall of man and his liberation by the aid of one who comes from on high, that is, a divine redeemer.

Greece, the home of the arts and of letters, gathered up the echoes from the Orient and in its

fables and myths of Prometheus, Pandora, and Hercules evidently shadows forth the two great dogmas of the primitive fall of man and his restoration through the work of a son come from Heaven. But setting aside the poetical myths of Greece, which veil the ancient but disfigured traditions, let us listen to the solemn words that fell from the lips of Socrates, the greatest of her wise men: "O Alcibiades, ask nothing of the gods; let us wait until the One sent of Heaven comes to teach us our duties toward gods and men, and let us hope that that day is not far distant."[1]

And now we are at Rome, that great people, who held in their hands the empire of all the known ancient world and gathered to itself all the glories of Greece and Egypt, of Persia and Mesopotamia, and to which the poet very fitly addresses these words:

"Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento."

This people, that in its pride believed it was the master of the world and the absolute arbiter of its destinies, strange to say, could not shake off the belief and the universal hope of a liberator. Cicero, who so assiduously collected all the learning of Greece and Rome, is both amazed and troubled at the thought of a universal monarch, announced by the oracles and expected by all peoples, and as if in fear asks himself who this man may

[1]Alcibiades, ii.

be: *In quem hominem?* and at what time he will come: *In quod tempus?*

A testimony still more explicit than Cicero's is that of Tacitus, the austere historian of Rome, who wrote these words: "There was an opinion that the East would gain the upper hand and that men coming from Judea would be the masters of the world."[1] These words are repeated literally by Suetonius, the biographer of the Cæsars.[2]

It is not without reason that some think that the greatest of the Latin poets alludes to this profound and world-wide persuasion, when he sings of the coming in of a new world, of the return of the golden age, and of the birth of a babe, a child of Heaven.[3]

And now it is time to gather up the scattered threads of our argument and to bring out into fullest light the truth we wish to draw from them. It is a fact beyond all doubt that the Hebrews had always a living faith and hope in a Messias, a future Redeemer. The life and story of that most remarkable people cluster about and center in the coming and expectation of this marvelous personage. This hope, this expectation of His coming, never ceased, was never obscured in Israel, whether in prosperity or adversity. If at times it

[1]Hist. v, xiii.
[2]Life of Vespasian.
[3]Eclogue iv. All these traditions have been collected by Nicolas (Philosophical Studies), Monsabré (Conf.), and Freppel (Conf.), The Divinity of Christ, ii.

seemed to be weakened, the voice of this or that prophet was heard in their midst reviving it. They bore this faith with them under the willows of the Euphrates and the Tigris, to the mountains of Media, and into the synagogues they built in Alexandria, Antioch, and Thessalonica, and in the principal cities of Asia Minor.

This faith and hope in the expected Saviour went on steadily increasing and growing in clearness as the ages rolled by, until at the time of Augustus and Herod it could not have been more generally diffused and more manifest. A frenzy, a feverish anxiety, seized the whole people. "The Messias is coming!" they said; "He is come!" "He is Tendas!" "He is Judas the Galilean!" "He is John!" The Sanhedrim was troubled and sent an embassy to John asking him: "Art thou, then, the Messias"?

An echo of this faith and hope of Israel, as we have said, and a splendid testimony to it, was the expectation of the entire world, represented by China and India, Persia and Egypt, Greece and Rome.

And note, my friends, that the expectation of a *Liberator* and a *Redeemer* wounded the pride of these peoples, and so much the more since they were most powerful, in the very flower of their youth, and proudly jealous of their independence. How could they, strong and free as they felt them-

selves to be, ever dream of the coming of this Saviour, they whose iron hand was laid heavily upon their enemies? And, moreover, how could they dream of the coming of a Saviour who was a *stranger* and a *foreigner?* Here all human reasoning is at fault, and we must acknowledge that this universal and constant expectation did violence to the nature of those peoples, and hence we are forced to conclude that it was not a creation of man, nor a natural phenomenon, but a fact that antedated all history and all legends, that its origin ran back to the first man, that it was a part of the primitive revelation, that it came from God and that God preserved it in the midst of the shipwreck of so many other truths divinely revealed.

My friends, the promised babe, the Saviour of the world, is born in Bethlehem; from high Heaven comes the message to the shepherds: "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David; and this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."[1] Docile as were the shepherds, let us go in spirit to Bethlehem and see this Word that is come to pass. Let us bow down in adoration at the feet of this divine infant. He alone lived before He was born; He lived in the minds and hearts of patriarchs,

[1]Luke ii. 11-12.

prophets, and peoples, and still more wonderful, of all the peoples living under the sun. He was desired, invoked, loved before He made a footprint on this earth; He had the East and West discussing Him before He existed. Has there ever been, or is there, or will there ever be, a man of whom this can be said or believed? Therefore the Babe is not simply a child of man; He is the Son of God, since He alone on this earth is master of the past, and before He was born He saw the generations of sixty, of eighty centuries prostrate before Him.

This fact is solitary on this earth. This babe, poor and weak, was yearned for and lived before being born. When He grew to man's estate He was nailed to the Cross as the worst of malefactors, and nailed to the Cross He is loved and adored in every corner of the earth and by all civilized peoples. Barbarians when looking upon Him have been civilized, when believing in Him they have fallen upon their knees and humbly adored Him. Has there ever been, or is there now, greatness equal to this?

DISCOURSE IV

The Birth of Jesus Christ

And it came to pass that in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria: And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: "Fear not: for behold I bring you good

tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven: the shepherds said one to another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us." And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child.—GOSPEL, *Luke ii.* 1-18.

MY FRIENDS, you have heard the narrative which St. Luke alone of the four evangelists has left us, of the birth of Jesus Christ and of the very simple details associated with it. It is a narrative that we have heard hundreds and hundreds of times and still it is always, like the memories of childhood, beautiful and touching. The desolate stable, Joseph and Mary seeking shelter there at dead of night, the manger and resting in it the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, the

flight of angels hovering and singing above the stable and calling the shepherds, the shepherds coming from the near-by hills and adoring the new-born Saviour of the world—all this forms a picture of such enchanting simplicity and incomparable beauty that it fairly captivates and entrances the heart. To him who has the least spark of faith everything in that deserted stable speaks with a living voice. That babe of Heaven, promised of God, announced by patriarchs and prophets, symbolized in the rites of the synagogue, confusedly expected by all peoples, in whom are centered the desires and the hopes of the past, in whom will be concentrated the admiration, the faith, the love of the future—that babe of Heaven does not utter a syllable; He weeps and cries as might the least among the babes of men; but if the tongue is silent, His actions speak. And what do they say? They say what His words will later on confirm; in the beautiful phrase of St. Bernard, He now says by example what He will later on affirm by word.

Having spoken to you of the fitness and the congruity of the Incarnation, having set before you as best I could the reasons of His delay in coming until the fulness of time, having showed you that this divine child lived in the expectation of all peoples even before He was born, I now ask you to contemplate Him in the manger, which He

converted into a pulpit from whence He proclaimed the gospel of truth.

In this Discourse, which is more properly a Homily, we shall follow step by step the Gospel narrative, drawing from it practical lessons, which, while common, do not on that account cease to be interesting and most important.

The Gospel narrative, which I have read for you, contains three distinct parts: the first, beginning with the first verse and ending with the sixth, tells of the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and of the reason for undertaking it; the second, which is all included in the seventh verse, tells of the birth of Jesus Christ; the third, which begins with the eighth and ends with the seventeenth, tells of the message of the angels to the shepherds and how these went over to Bethlehem. The Roman Empire, after passing through civil wars of the utmost ferocity, wars that filled it with blood and slaughter, was now resting in profound peace; the temple of Janus was closed and Cæsar Augustus saw the Roman eagles feared and respected from the Tigris to the Tagus, from the Rhine to the Nile. Such civilization as was possible among pagans had reached its supremest heights; the voice of Hortensius and Cicero still resounded in the forum, the odes of Horace were sung in the streets, the sweet verses of Virgil, which saluted

the new birth of the world and the heavenly progeny, were upon the lips of all. Times had changed; the scepter of Juda had passed into the hands of a stranger, the seventy weeks were run out, the world was expecting the Saviour. An humble virgin of Nazareth, unknown to all, bore Him in her spotless womb, and the day on which He was to appear on earth was at hand. There was a prophecy of Micheas,[1] celebrated throughout all Israel, that the promised leader of Israel should be born in Bethlehem. Now the Virgin lived in the heart of Galilee, namely, in Nazareth, in a district far distant from Bethlehem. How, then, was the word of the prophet to be fulfilled? Everything is in the hand of God and of His word not a syllable shall fail. Men go on doing their own will, but even when following their passions they unconsciously carry out His designs and are the faithful executors of His will. Listen to the evangelist.

"At that time a decree went forth from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This first enrolment was made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria."[2] What was the

[1] V. 2.

[2] The enrolment ordered by Cæsar Augustus is referred to by profane writers; yet it is almost incredible how many difficulties rationalists have heaped together in order to prove St. Luke in error. To enumerate and refute them would require more space than can be given in a note. Any one wishing to get a complete knowledge of them may consult Didon (Life of Jesus, vol. I, appendix I), where he will find the question thoroughly cleared up and all difficulties answered.

motive that impelled Cæsar Augustus to order this enrolment? History does not say, but it was quite natural that he should wish to determine the tribute and to provide for the administration of that vast empire, or it may be that it was a feeling of pride, so that he could say with certainty: "These millions bow beneath my scepter." Who could ever think of saying that this decree of a Roman emperor was the fulfilment of a prediction of a prophet who lived six centuries before, and that it prescribed a long journey to the Son of God made man, whose vicars were one day to sit upon the throne of the same emperor? Let us learn to respect and venerate the counsels of God in all human events, because the good and the wicked alike serve Him, David as well as Saul, Cyrus as well as Zorobabel.

Palestine was not then, strictly speaking, a province of the Roman Empire; Herod was its king, a tributary king, and was also obliged to make that census of the people and of their property, which was a preparation and prelude to union with the empire.

This enrolment, according to Hebrew usage, required that every one should go to the country or city of his origin, and hence Joseph was obliged to go to Bethlehem and to take with him Mary, although she was on the eve of giving birth to her child. Both of them saw in this de-

cree the finger of God, who was leading them on to the place in which, according to the prophets, the Saviour of the world was to be born.

From Nazareth to Bethlehem is a journey of about four days,[1] or eighty kilometers (about fifty statute miles) by the direct road, which crosses the plain of Israel, and passes through Bethulia and Jerusalem, the road traversed by caravans. The poorer people traveled afoot, leading a beast laden with provisions, which at times they rode to relieve the fatigue of the journey.

The caravan, in which the women journeyed apart from the men, stopped from time to time under the shade of a tree or near a fountain, and to shelter themselves from the heat of the sun they gathered together in the *khan,* a species of enclosure of rough stones, which was to be found at the entrance of every village and afforded a miserable retreat for wayfarers and beasts.[2] At rise of sun the caravan began to move, singing the Psalms that referred to Jerusalem and to the Temple. It was a sight inspired by faith and

[1]Among the Orientals, as is well known, a day's journey is about twenty miles.

[2]The enclosed caravansary consisted of a court surrounded by small cells, without doors, raised a foot or two from the ground, and called *Leewan.* The animals were kept in the court and the travelers occupied the cells. If the latter did not care to sit or lie on the bare earth they provided themselves with strips of carpet or rugs, on which they sat cross-legged or stretched out at full length. Each prepared his own food and procured water from a nearby well. Such was the inn where Joseph and Mary could find no place.—BONGHI, Life of Jesus Christ.

piety, and one which admirably reflected the character of the Oriental peoples, grave, solemn, and profoundly religious.

Mary and Joseph, accompanying the caravan and passing through Jerusalem, where they likely made a short stay, continued on their way to Bethlehem, some ten kilometers distant, in a southerly direction. The country there is all broken; there are hills and valleys and precipices, and upon two of these hills, which unite and form a semicircle and a grassy amphitheater, and are covered with vineyards and olive orchards, with fig and almond trees, Bethlehem is situated. At a little distance is seen the field where Ruth, the poor Moabite, gleaned, and near-by the little hill on which was the threshing-floor of Booz. This was the native land of David, where he kept his father's flocks, the place chosen by God in which His Son was to be born.

Mary and Joseph must have arrived there at about set of sun, and the khan, or inn, of Bethlehem was crowded and there was no room for these two poor wayfarers, or as the evangelist says: "There was no room for them in the inn." In the sides of the mountains and hills of Palestine, which are of calcareous formation, sometimes nature opened gaping fissures and caverns, and sometimes the hand of man dug deep excavations, extending into the bowels of the earth, and in one

of these, which at times served as a refuge for men and animals, and which likely were called *stables,* the two wayfarers, footsore and weary, found a shelter.

My friends, I trust you will bear with me while I make a few ordinary but timely and appropriate observations, suitable to every class of persons and which arise naturally out of the Gospel narrative.

We see here two persons, Joseph and Mary, the holiest that ever lived upon this earth, who, with the greatest possible inconvenience to themselves, obey a foreign emperor, and he a pagan; but this is as nothing; we see also the Son of God Himself, the Saviour of the world, in His mother's womb, now about to be born, and who, together with His mother, obeys the same command, and at what cost you yourselves can imagine, for, as you know from the teachings of Faith, Jesus Christ from the first instant of His Incarnation had a most perfect knowledge of everything and lived in the beatific vision. Here, my friends, is the sovereign model according to which we are to regulate our conduct in whatever relates to constituted authority, both political and civil. If ever there were any persons who might exempt themselves from obedience to such authority, these were assuredly Joseph and Mary, and above all, the Son of God, who was about to

be born, the supreme legislator in heaven and on earth. And yet they obeyed with alacrity; they did not complain of the length of the journey or of the rigors of the season; they did not reason or set forth their privileges; they did not inquire if the authority that gave the command was a lawful authority, neither did they inquire into the reasons for giving the command; they asked no such questions; they simply obeyed.

We Christians and Catholics should follow this great example. Our unchangeable rule is that given by St. Paul, who, speaking to the Christians of Rome in the time of Nero, says: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." We Christians and Catholics, having before us the example of the Holy Family and holding steadfastly to the doctrine of the great apostle, do not argue in the presence of authority; we do not demand the proofs of its origin, we do not examine the title of its legitimacy; above and beyond it we see God, who rules all things here below, who causes the scepter to pass from ruler to ruler when and as He pleases; we do not consider the men in whom power is vested, but the power itself with which they are clothed; this is ever and always from God, even when in the hands of wicked men,

just as he who speaks from the pulpit, and he who offers the sacred mysteries at the altar is always the minister of God, though it may be an unworthy one. We Christians and Catholics never revolt against authority; we respect and obey it, not from fear, but for conscience' sake, because we feel it is our duty to do so, because, in a word, we are obeying God. But if this authority bids us to do what is an offence against God or contrary to His law, then we fearlessly but respectfully reply, as did the apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than man." "Do as you will with us, but we can not go against our conscience or fail in our duty toward God." This is our rule, whether in the presence of a Diocletian or a Constantine, of a Charles the Great or a Henry the Eighth, whether we live under a republic or under an empire, whether standing before a legislative assembly or before executive authority. This is the liberty of the Gospel of Christ, which bids us give unto God that which is God's and unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's.

Consider for a moment with the eyes of faith those two wayfarers going up from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Those two spouses are not separated for an instant; they are constantly beside each other; they are reverently affectionate and each is anxious to anticipate the will of the other; each understands the other as if by instinct; they con-

verse together in low and gentle tones, but not of the things of earth; their thoughts and their converse is all of heaven; they do not complain, they have no fear, they are not discouraged; they see in all things the hand of God and they commit themselves to His keeping and guidance. They are always joyous and tranquil and the imperturbable serenity of their souls is radiant in their countenances. Amiable and courteous to all, they neither seek nor shun the company of those about them, happy to do to all whatever service they can. They studiously conceal the mystery of which they alone hold the secret, and they feel a joy in being in the midst of so many poor, pious souls, who, like themselves, are journeying on toward Bethlehem. How peaceful they are, how modest, how humble! What faith and trust in God! Their fellow-travelers gaze upon them in amazement, they point them out to one another, they show them all reverence and respect. It would seem that from their looks and acts, from the very persons of these two spouses, there go forth a divine light and a breath of heaven. The Man-God, the Redeemer of the world, is journeying on with them, and legions of invisible and adoring angels, marveling at such greatness and such poverty, at such virtue combined with such humility and such simplicity, accompany them and diffuse about them a heavenly fragrance.

As we have said, the two pilgrims, not finding lodgings at the khan or caravansary, betook themselves to one of those grottoes or caves, which may be still seen midway up the sides of the hills, and there sought shelter during the night.

Great God, and is it here, in this grotto, that Thy Son, the longed-for Messias, is to be born? Is this the mansion, this the royal palace, that Thou hast prepared for Him who is to be the King of all nations, and whom Thou hast begotten of Thyself from all eternity amidst the splendors of the angels? Reason, confounded and bewildered, can only trust to the Gospel, and adore in silence the mystery of faith and love about to be accomplished.

The bright eastern sky was studded and luminous with countless stars, the confused hum of the busy day was dying away, here and there in the huts upon the hillsides and in the houses of Bethlehem, flickering, uncertain lights appeared and disappeared; night had shrouded everything in darkness, and a deep and solemn silence reigned throughout the valley and about that blessed grotto. Let us reverently approach and witness what is taking place in that cave, soon to be converted into a very paradise.

In one corner is Joseph, wholly recollected, praying and meditating; the Blessed Virgin,

with hands clasped, her eyes radiant with joy lifted up to heaven, clothed in a cloud of heavenly light, more like an angel than a creature of earth, seems in an ecstasy, wholly absorbed in God.

In that blessed silence, in the very heart of night, is born in the cold a babe that holds out its tiny, trembling hands to the Virgin and silently craves the cares that only a mother can give. The Mother, in an ecstasy of delight, gazes upon Him, kneels before Him, adores Him, folds Him in her arms, and with eyes beaming with ineffable joy and filled with tears, presents Him to Joseph, kisses Him, wraps Him in swaddling clothes, and lays Him in a manger. All this we are told by the Gospel with sublime and unrivaled simplicity in these words: "And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." The greatest fact in all history, a fact with which the fate of the whole human race was bound up, is contained in this short sentence. There is not a single note of amazement, not a word of compassion for the suffering babe, or of sympathy for His poor mother, not a reference to the insensibility and the ingratitude of men, who refused a shelter to these three homeless beings, nor is there a hint to reveal the future greatness of the new-born child.

There is nothing of all this; it is simply a naked narrative of the fact in the fewest possible words, and nothing more.

"She who conceived as a virgin," says Father Didon, "brought forth as a virgin; the Gospel implies that she did not know either the weakness or the prostration of our mothers. She herself received the Child and laid Him to rest in a make-shift cradle. Christian faith kneels forever before this woman with the Child upon her breast; it has learned in gazing on them gentleness, poverty, and sacrifice; it has constructed ever-new visions of the ineffable scene, without tiring, without exhausting its beauty, its power, or its charm."

Note the word *first-born,* which the evangelist applies to the divine babe. Does the evangelist wish to imply that Mary had other sons? God forbid, and to say so would be a manifest heresy, since we salute Mary as the Virgin by excellence, ever and always a virgin. The word *first-born* means her first child, that is, as we believe, Jesus Christ was her *first,* her *last,* her *only* child. And who can believe that Mary, who was so jealous and sensitive of her virginity that she preferred to forego the glory of being the Mother of God rather than sacrifice it, would then give it up? Who can believe that, having become the Mother of God, through so astounding a miracle, still

continuing a virgin, she would voluntarily relinquish so great a glory? How can we believe, as St. Thomas says, that, having received from Heaven such a Son, she could possibly desire to have others? O Mary, virgin and mother, prostrate at thy feet, we believe that these two glorious titles are so united in thee that one beautifies and completes the other, and that both together constitute in thee a miracle the like of which the world had never seen and will never see again. Thou art like to a tender tree, warmed by the sun, and refreshed by the dews of heaven; it grows and of itself puts forth a flower white as the driven snow, and from the flower comes forth a fruit, which when ripe falls to the ground; both flower and fruit are the product of the plant, which, instead of being disfigured by them, is adorned and beautified.

God, says Gregory of Nazianzen, is the fountain of purity and virginity; nay, He is purity and virginity itself, and the nearer a soul approaches to Him the more pure and virginal it becomes; just as a cloud, the higher it rises above the earth and the more directly it receives the rays of the sun, the more luminous it becomes and the more it is suffused with purple and gold. Mary was lifted up to such a height and drew so near unto God that she was wholly penetrated and clothed with His virtue; her being came into

immediate contact with His; she received His Son into her bosom; she clothed Him with her own flesh, and, so clothed, she presented Him to all the posterity of Adam. Never was there another creature such a virgin as Mary, and her purity and virginity reached their sublimest height of perfection when she became a mother, so that these prerogatives, which in other women exclude each other, in her were so united that each perfected the other.[1]

Mary conceived as a virgin and her begetting in time is like to the generation of the Father from all eternity: *"Behold a virgin shall conceive."* Mary brought forth as a virgin: *"Born of the virgin Mary."* A ray of light passes through air and water and crystal; the air is motionless, the water is not stirred, and neither is the crystal broken or tarnished. I think, and my thought takes birth in the depth of my soul without effort and without dividing it; I think, and my thought while abiding in the depths of my soul, invisible to all, comes forth from my soul in its entirety, clothes itself with sound and external signs, and becomes sensible and visible and manifest to all, and withal neither within me nor without is there a shadow of division. Similarly Jesus

[1] I hope with the aid of the Fathers in another place to prove that Mary was in a truer sense the mother of Jesus Christ, precisely because she was a virgin, than are other women the mothers of their own children.

is born of Mary and all the while her virginity is intact: *"Born of the virgin Mary."*

Not far from Bethlehem to the southeast lies a rich and beautiful valley, where even in the winter season numerous flocks of sheep, according to the custom of the East, wander to and fro night and day grazing.[1] While the mystery, which as St. Paul says, was hidden to the world, was being accomplished in the grotto, while the village of Bethlehem was buried in sleep, the spirit of God began that work which shall end only when time is no more. Throughout that valley, which stretches to the south and east of Bethlehem, there were shepherds watching and keeping their flocks. They were likely the only men who were watching at that hour, and they were certainly the poorest of the poor in that country,[2] but their

[1]Professor Reuss of Strasburg, an Old Catholic and a man of great talent and learning, can not understand how at that season and at that hour there could have been flocks and shepherds in the open country. But we should bear in mind that we are in the climate of Palestine, in latitude thirty-two and a half degrees, and in a country warmer than Sicily, where shepherds could easily have found shelter under tents and here come forth on the appearance of the angels.

[2]Father Didon, who spent two years studying in Palestine, says in his Life of Jesus, p. 55: "Shepherds in the East represent the lowest class of the agricultural people; they are the servants of servants. The landlord does not work; he has his laborers, workmen and the keepers of his flocks. Even at this day the shepherds may be seen with their heads covered with long black veils, with sheepskins over their shoulders, their feet either bare or incased in miserable sandals, and bearing in their hands small staves of oak or sycamore. By turns they keep their watches from dark to dawn seated upon rocks about great fires. When the first rains fall, the earth, later on to be sown with seed, is covered with grass and flowers, and on this early herbage the flocks feed.

habits were simple and they were filled with the ancient faith. To these men who were watching, who were the poorest of the poor, was reserved the high honor of being the first to be called to adore the new-born Saviour and to be the first believers of Israel.

This, my friends, is a striking fact. The first who were reputed worthy to see and adore the Son of God made man, were not the rich, nor the learned, nor the great, nor the kings of the earth, but the poor, the ignorant, the dregs of the people. This is characteristic of the religion Christ brought on earth; its preference is for the poor, the despised, and the suffering, because these are better prepared by poverty and sorrow to know the truth, and they obey the voice of truth with greater promptness and alacrity. And indeed, how could the rich, the great, and the powerful ones of the earth, at that hour either buried in sleep or in quest of pleasure and enjoyment, have heard the voice of the Saviour or have come and knelt at His feet? How could they, who were so haughty and proud, have prostrated themselves before a babe resting upon a bed of straw in a manger?

God, both in the natural and supernatural order, works through secondary causes, and the angels are the ordinary messengers of His will. "And behold an angel of the Lord," and one of

the highest, as I think, "stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round them, and they feared with a great fear." The apparitions of heavenly beings are nearly always accompanied by the radiance of light. Is it because the angels are luminous and of their very nature shed light about them? By no means. The angels are spiritual substances and therefore of quite a different nature from the light that is diffused throughout the atmosphere.

Invisible things, such as the angels, can not make their presence and their action known to visible beings, such as we are, except through some external manifestation, and hence they must make use of visible objects; and since among sensible things light is the most beautiful, and better than any other represents the perfections of spirits, therefore do they appear clothed in it and in this raiment do they ordinarily reveal their presence.[1] This blinding light shining out in the midst of the dense darkness of the night naturally filled the poor shepherds with fear, and the angel to reassure them said at once: "Fear not, rather rejoice; for I bring you tidings which should fill you and all Israel with great joy. In Bethlehem, the city

[1]The text says: *"Claritas Dei—Brightness of God."* This is evidently a Hebrew form of speech, in which the superlative is formed by adding the name God to the substantive, and hence *Claritas Dei* means "the greatest brightness."

of David, is born a Saviour, and you shall know Him by this sign: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.'"[1]

And are these the signs, my friends, by which the Messias, the Son of the eternal God, become the Son of Man, should be known, the signs of weakness and extremest poverty? So it is. Human pride must be broken, and this is the first lesson given us from Bethlehem.

True this weakness and extreme poverty might have been a source of scandal to the shepherds, might have done violence to their reason and endangered their faith; but God disposes all things with supremest wisdom, and while on the one hand He humbles the pride of men with the sight of the grotto of Bethlehem, on the other He strengthens and sustains their faith by the heavenly message of the angels; if the swaddling clothes and the manger show the feebleness and the extreme poverty of the heavenly Babe, the message of the angels, the light that encompassed them, proved to a demonstration that He was truly the promised Saviour. It is always thus. The life of Jesus Christ from the manger to the

[1]The shepherds undoubtedly heard these words in their own tongue. How, it may be asked, could angels, being spirits, utter words as men do? The answer is easy. The angels can produce in the air the same movements that men produce with the tongue and consequently with the same effect.

Cross is a continuous and alternating display of the most utter feebleness and of the most stupendous greatness; of a power that is proper only to God, and of an infirmity that is proper only to man; and thus the double nature of Christ is constantly coming into view, so that while on the one hand we are constrained to see in Him the man, on the other we must recognize in Him God, and thus our faith in Him, as the God-Man, is firmly established.

And while the angel was thus discoursing to the shepherds a multitude of other angels joined him, and together they broke out into a song of praise to God, singing: "Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." Everything that happens here below is foreseen and willed in heaven, and all the events that take place here on earth are the effects of invisible and secret causes which are at work in heaven. And it may be truly said that the whole mystery of the life of Christ, who is born to-day, is contained in these two words which will fill all space and time: "Glory and peace! Glory to God in heaven, peace to men on earth." And why glory to God? Because God has so abased Himself as to make Himself man and because man is now God. Because God, made man, reveals the measureless greatness of His love, and displays the wealth of His wisdom, His power, His justice, and all His

perfections. Glory to God, because now the gates of heaven are opened and men, reconciled to God and re-made according to His image, will enter in there and the tongues that exalt Him and sing His praises and greatness will be multiplied.

Peace to men on earth, because the divine Master has appeared in their midst, because the expiatory victim of their transgressions is prepared and has commenced the sacrifice that later on will be consummated on Golgotha. That which brings peace to men glorifies God, and that which glorifies God brings peace to men. To-day God from the heights of heaven sees an innocent Son born on earth, a Son innocent, holy, spotless, equal to Himself, to whom He can and must say: "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee do I find all my delight." To-day for the first time goes up from earth a cry, a wail, that placates God, that does Him adequate honor, an honor worthy of Himself. To-day God from high heaven sees His only-begotten Son clad in the vesture of our manhood, and in embracing Him He can not but embrace all His brothers according to the flesh, and therefore there is peace between heaven and earth, between men and God. Glory, then, to God in the highest and on earth peace to men. But to what sort of men? *To men of good will,* not to the indolent, the slothful, and the malevolent, but to the

cheerful, the willing, the benevolent, and to those of good will.[1]

Simple, upright souls, souls of good will, although destitute of learning, illuminated by God, how I know not, have a clearer, keener, surer insight than the learned; they are attracted toward the truth as if by a holy instinct, and seize it at once. A simple, docile faith leads straight to God; while the learned, puffed up by pride, give themselves to discussion; they are intractable and lose themselves in a labyrinth of proofs and doubts. The shepherds saw the light, they heard the voice of the angels calling them to Bethlehem, and they at once called out the one to the other, saying: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us; and they came in haste and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger."

Any one who has a spark of faith can very well fancy what those poor shepherds said and did when they entered into the grotto of Bethlehem.

My dear friends, let us, as men of good will, full of faith, docile as were the shepherds, let us also

[1]There are various explanations of this phrase of the Sacred Texts, *Men of good will.* Lack of space forbids me to give them all. They may be found in A Lapide, and better still in Curei (St. Luke, p. 315). Bonghi translates it, *Acceptable men.* To me the expression seems a trifle feeble.

go in spirit to Bethlehem; let us look upon the mystery of love, which is there accomplished, and prostrate there before the manger let us say and do all that faith and love inspire and demand.[1]

[1]The field of the shepherds is still there; flocks feed in winter under the olives, as in the days of Jesus, in fields where the grass still grows green and the anemones flower. Worship has never left the place where shone the brightness of the birthday dawn of Christ. On Christmas evening the people of Bethlehem flock to the Church of St. Helena, of which only the ruins remain, and in its desolate crypt they pray to the shepherds of Beit-Saour, their ancestors, who were the first apostles. Clad in their long white veils, seated in groups on broken walls, beneath the shade of circling olives, the women, seen from afar, recall the mysterious beings who heralded the advent of Jesus. The crowd has an air of cheerfulness and calm, which harmonizes well with the memories, of which the plain is full; and with that Eastern light, which colors the whole and gives to the sterile rock itself an appearance of richness and of life.—DIDON, Life of Jesus, vol. i, pp. 52-53.

DISCOURSE V

Who is Jesus Christ?

As yet science has not been able, and possibly never will be able, to number the stars that move harmoniously in the firmament; for as the telescope enables us to penetrate farther and farther into the measureless depths of the heavens, other suns and other stars, that were buried in the abysses of space, come into view. Our earth, a small satellite of the orb of day, is an atom, an imperceptible point, as compared with the countless celestial bodies; and on this atom, on this imperceptible point, peoples are moving and bustling about, and among these peoples the least is the people of Judea,[1] and Bethlehem is a small village of Judea; and at Bethlehem the most miserable lodging, or rather the most squalid grotto, is that in which a young virgin, unknown in all Israel, sought shelter; and of this virgin to-day a Babe is born. The angels announced His birth singing: "Glory be to God on high and on earth peace to men of good will."

And what is the meaning of all this, my friends? He who among all beings holds the first place, the

[1]Palestine has a superficial area of six thousand kilometers and Judea hardly one thousand, less than many of our provinces (in Italy).

primal Being, the infinite Being, He who created countless stars and flung them out into the boundless spaces of the heavens, as if they were minute bits of gold and silver, comes down upon this little stretch of earth, dwarfs Himself at Bethlehem, hides Himself in a cave, becomes a babe, the lowliest of the babes of Israel, for I scarcely think that another was ever born in a grotto. At the sight of such humiliation I can understand how proud human reason in its scorn cries out with Marcion of old: "Away with these swaddling clothes and rough mangers";[1] all this is unworthy of God, the Creator and Lord of the universe. But faith on its side cries out in still clearer tones: "*And the Word was made flesh.*" It was fitting that He who is first should be last: *First and last;* that He who is Alpha should be Omega: *The Alpha and the Omega;* that He who is the Beginning should be the End: *The Beginning and the End,* since by Him all things are accomplished: *That all things may be fulfilled.*

There is a sovereign law in heaven and on earth, namely, that he who humbles himself shall be exalted, and that God lifts up the lowly; and God, who established this law, made an application of it to Himself. He, the Highest, the Infinite, whom the heavens can not contain, descends down and

[1] *Aufer a nobis pannos et dura præsepia.*

down through the scale of beings that went forth from His creative hand, down as a ray of light through the heavenly hierarchies; He can go still lower, and He goes down through all the suns, and stars and immeasurable fields of light; He can go still lower and He comes down to this earth, this little atom rolling in space, without any light of its own, this extreme border of creation.

On this earth there exists a being, whose nobler part is spirit and his less noble matter, and in this creature nearly all corporeal elements are found grouped together and come into immediate contact with spirit. He, who is above all things, who creates, preserves, and governs them all, descends even to this creature, unites Himself to this spirit, and then to this body, the receding mist, as it were, of being, in order to return again the way He came, to ascend through the series of beings already traversed, drawing after Him the whole universe, bodies and souls and angels, and leading all back to the feet of God, as a ray of light is reflected back to the point of departure.

When one wants to draw anything after him he takes it by the outer edge; when one wants to raise a body, resting the lever on a fulcrum, he puts the point of it under the extreme edge of the body to be raised. This is what the divine Word does in placing Himself upon this uttermost point of creation. He lays hold of man, body and soul,

lifts him up wholly above other creatures and leads him back to God.

Behold, my friends, this *First* and *Last,* this *Alpha* and *Omega,* this *Beginning* and *End,* this *God* and *Man;* behold this babe in the arms of an humble virgin, in a stable at midnight, shivering with cold; behold Him who is light eternal, who kindles the love of the seraphim.

O Son of God, O Saviour of the world, O God-Man, annihilated[1] as Thou art, I, prostrate in the dust, acknowledge Thee, I adore Thee, and I crave Thy pardon if to-day in the presence of these devout people I venture to fix my gaze on that mystery of mysteries, the ineffable nuptials of the divine Nature and the human in the unity of Thy adorable Person. This is the subject on which I intend to speak.

To any one contemplating and studying Jesus Christ, as faith presents Him to us, there will necessarily come up to his mind three points to be considered, each distinct, but inseparable from the others, namely: 1. God, or more properly the second Person of the august Trinity, the Word of the Father, who assumed flesh. 2. The human nature itself assumed by the divine Word. 3. The way in which human nature was assumed, or the bond by which human nature is united to the Son

[1] *Annihilated* is the word used in Italian. When used as here and elsewhere in these volumes, it is of course to be understood in a metaphorical sense. Language has its limitations.—Tr.

of God. This is a limitless sea, strewn with rocks and reefs, over which I must make my way in a frail vessel; it is fortunate for me and for you that high above us the star of faith, that is never eclipsed and never veiled, is shining brightly on our course, and keeping our eyes steadily fixed upon it let us confidently set sail.

The first point that presents itself to us in speaking of Jesus Christ is the divine Word, the Son of the Eternal. Who, then, is this divine Word? This is a formidable question to which I shall reply by condensing into a few words the teachings of the Faith and the uttermost conclusions of human reason.

In speaking of God, if we would learn anything at all we must keep ever before our eyes His most beautiful and perfect image, and the one, too, nearest ourselves, for it is none other than man—man such as we are.

Let us, then, each for himself, fix our eyes upon ourselves. The first thing that arrests our attention is the body with its senses, but this need give us no concern, since it is only the wrapper of another and an incomparably nobler substance called the soul. Let us, then, cross the threshold of the soul and make our way into that sanctuary and into its most mysterious recesses and push forward until we come to where thought takes birth and sheds its light abroad. What is this thought?

It is a ceaseless emanation from the soul, it is the child of the mind, of which it presents us the image and the image of all it thinks; it is the unerring mirror in which we see passing one after another the images of all things that exist in the visible world and in the invisible. This thought is distinct from the mind that gives it birth, that produces it without wearying, that is not separated from it. It is within it and yet without it, and it forms one with it, so that the soul can truthfully say: *I think.* I and my thought are one and no power can separate it from me. The soul is seen and contemplated in its thought; in its thought all its forces are in action, and its thought exhibits it as it is.

Our soul, my friends, gives birth to countless thoughts; who can number them? Who can say: This is my last thought, here the fecundity of the soul is exhausted? This exhaustless multiplicity of the soul's thoughts, while it shows its fecundity, shows also its feebleness; for the nearer a being reduces its forces to unity, the more it concentrates its activity and the more perfect it is. A man of genius takes in things the most dissimilar in a flash and knows their relations; he does not proceed step by step, from argument to argument by deduction and induction; he simply views the question and securely passes judgment.

Again, the more acute and ready a man's mind

is the more he abbreviates and condenses his thoughts, and the more he approaches to a single thought; the feebler and more sluggish he is the slower will be his progress and the more numerous his steps, or his thoughts, number necessarily supplying the lack of intensity. If he could with a few thoughts, or with a single thought, comprehend all things that now require so many thoughts, would he not be more perfect? Would not his condition be preferable, who could with one rapid bound pass from the peaks of the Alps to the peaks of the Himalayas, to his who, in passing over all that distance, would have to go step by step?[1]

So far well. Now God, being infinitely perfect, reduces all His internal acts to the greatest unity; He has only one thought, eternal, infinite, immutable, substantial, that comprehends most perfectly all His thoughts, all His cognitions, and is always in act; it is the birth of His mind, His Word, which, emanating from His substance, expresses His whole mind and says everything that is outside it. It is but one most simple, one *single*

[1]I remember a fact that throws light on this truth. The celebrated Father Secchi taught higher calculus. His pupils, and I fancy I hear them now, while admiring his deep knowledge, used to complain that they could not follow him. The brightest of his pupils gave the reason for this. "Professor Secchi," he said, "in his calculations leaps over all the intermediate operations and goes straight to the solution; we can not do this, and hence we are only midway when he has finished. He is too brilliant, he shortens too much, and hence we can not follow him." And he spoke the truth.

thought, and can not be other than one, because it contains all thoughts and is adequate to all.

Would you have a still clearer knowledge of this mystery of man and God? Follow me attentively. Let us set before us, say, all the works wrought by Michael Angelo, all the pictures painted by Raphael, a splendid temple with all its parts great and small; all these works, all these figures, and this temple, before they existed at all were, even down to the most minute detail, in the mind, in the thought of Michael Angelo, of Raphael, and of the architect who built the temple. Who can question this? And how were they there? These were all there in a single point, altogether yet all entirely distinct, and much more perfectly than is the tree in the seed. And being in their mind they were invisible and were one with the mind; and after they had been transferred into realities outside the mind, they did not cease to be in the mind that conceived them. This is all so evident that there is no contradicting it. And now for the application.

Let your eyes range round about over all the earth; go down into the bowels of the earth and penetrate into the abysses of the world; let your thought career round among all creatures, from the tender blade of grass just showing above the ground in the meadow to the aged oak that challenges the storm; from the microbes, thousands

and thousands of which swim in a single drop of water, to the eagle that sweeps majestically through the spaces of the heavens; call to mind the millions and millions of living beings in the air, in the water, and on the bosom of the earth, and recollect that many of them have an organism invisible to the naked eye and yet most perfect in every detail, and reflect that all we see upon the earth is not the millionth part of what is scattered throughout the numberless and vast worlds of creation. Nor is this all. Think of the millions and millions of men that have been and will be upon the earth and of the fertility of their minds; think of the millions of angelic spirits and of the thoughts that went out from their intellects as rays go out from the sun; think of all the bodies, of all the souls, of all the spirits that ever were and ever will be and of all they did and will do. What grandeur! What order! What harmony! What beauty! The mind is amazed, overwhelmed, prostrated. Before all these things were in existence in the universe, my friends, where were they? These creatures, each of which is a marvel of perfection and beauty, with all their powers and energies and perfections, were all and are still without a single exception in the divine Mind; it contains them all in itself just as they are, and they are in His mind reduced to an inexpressibly perfect and sovereign unity. And do not forget

that this mind, *this infinite and eternal thought,* can produce other beings beyond all count, as beautiful, aye more beautiful, than those already created and with which we are acquainted.

Behold, this is the Son of God, the Word of the Father; this is the brightness of eternal light, the mirror of His goodness, the true and real image, the splendor of His substance; He is that one eternal, most simple act by which God thinks Himself and all things that He has created or can create. But of this divine Word I shall speak more at length farther on when I come to consider the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

Now that you know some little of who the Word is, who assumed human nature, let us inquire what that human nature is which He assumed.

A perfect man, as philosophy teaches, is made up of two substances, body and soul. The soul being more like to God, and therefore uniting more readily with Him than the body, was, as St. Thomas teaches, not in the order of time, but of dignity and cause, assumed before the body. God, the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by an eternal, most simple act of the mind conceives a soul the most perfect possible, and in conceiving it by an eternal and most simple act of the will creates it out of nothing. In this soul, the supreme masterpiece of wisdom and creative power, an intelligence such as becomes its perfection shines

forth in all its splendor. Joined to this sovereign intelligence is a will, its worthy executor, so exalted and so righteous that it can will only what is good.

In creating this soul God simultaneously forms a body which is to be its fitting companion, and in order that it may be a fitting companion of such a soul He does not wish that man shall have any part in it.

God Himself, the triune God, the cause of all things, by His infinite power forms immediately in the womb of a virgin, preserved from all infection of sin, a body as perfect as is possible to His omnipotence. And this body, which of course was a miracle of symmetry and beauty, He joins to a soul, which informs it and makes it its own. Between this soul and this body, there is no medium, no subordinate form, no vegetable soul, no sensitive soul; it is a human, rational soul, which, created by God, forms, united to the body, one sole nature. This body does not come down from heaven, nor is it formed of any other substance whatsoever; it was but a rudimental germ, which, coming down generation after generation from Adam, reached the Virgin and in her, by the power of the Most High, flowered into a perfect body, the worthy abode of the soul which is wedded to the divine Word: "*And the Word was made flesh.*

My friends, we have now a soul adorned with every endowment and power, with intelligence, will, and fullest liberty; we have a body equally furnished out with all the most perfect qualities, the immediate work of God; we have the union of this soul and of this body, effected at the very instant in which the former was created and the latter formed. Now what took place at that instant? What relations were established between this human nature and the Person of the Son of God? I hasten to tell you, for I fear that any delay may lead you to fancy the human nature as existing before its union with the divine Word, and therefore I abridge and, as it were, cut in two the second point of my argument in order that I may go on at once to the third, which completes and elucidates the second. I bespeak your best attention, for now we shall see, in as far as this is possible to us, the tie by which the two natures are bound together.

In order to aid our weak minds let us go back again to man, the most living image of God on this earth, and follow in the footsteps of St. Augustine and St. Fulgentius.

Let man enter again into himself and keep his eye fixed there on the mind where thought is begotten. Let him form a thought, an idea, no matter of what, say of light. This idea of light is there in his mind; it is distinct from his mind, and

from himself. No one sees it, no one even suspects its existence. He may keep it there within himself; no one constrains him to manifest it. But he may and does, when and as he wills, freely utter the word "*light.*" What has happened? The idea of light remains still whole and entire in his mind, and at the same time, in some way inexplicable to us, it is joined with the sound of his voice and has gone forth from him; I have heard it, I have thought of *light* as well as he and I have learned his thought. Note, the idea of light has not left the mind of him who begot it; it is, as it were, incarnated in sound, sound has become its vesture, its body; it has gone forth and yet it abides within him; it is made known and yet it is not changed; it has come within the dominion of sense and yet it is invisible; the sound in which it is enclosed is restricted and fades away and yet the idea is neither restricted nor does it fade away.

Similarly the Word, the substantial Idea of the Father, is always in Him, and yet it assumes human nature and makes Itself known among men; in Himself He is invisible and yet He becomes visible in His assumed nature; in Himself He is immutable and infinite, and yet He becomes mutable and finite, inasmuch as He is united to human nature; He is in the bosom of His Father and in the womb of His mother, and yet He is but One in Him and One in the nature He assumes. Think

of it, ye men, and you will in some way comprehend how the union of the two natures came about. But let us go on and still further develop the mystery.

Put a piece of iron in the fire; it first becomes red and then glows with a white heat; there is not an atom of it that is not wrapped in flame and pervaded by the fire, so that the iron and the fire have become but one. Is such the union of the divine Word with human nature? No; the union of iron and fire is an accidental union; it is temporary, it increases and decreases, and finally ceases altogether; the union of the Word and human nature is instantaneous; it will endure forever and be ever the same. The union of any two different substances is the more intimate and perfect the more perfect and noble their nature is, and what nature could be more perfect than the divine nature, and the human nature assumed by the Word, and hence what union could be more intimate than that existing between them?

Take a tree, for example; it has roots, a trunk, branches, and leaves; the sap that filters through its countless and delicate fibers bears with it the life that is diffused equally throughout every part of the tree, even the most minute and invisible. The life-giving sap and the tree are distinct one from the other, and yet they form but one object, so that we say: "That is a tree." Is this union

such as that of the two natures in Jesus Christ? No, we must go still higher.

Let us take the human mind; it is made for truth; truth is its natural food. When truth is presented to the mind, it seizes it, makes it its own, and rests in it. The one is wedded to the other in a wonderful way, so that the one is in the other, and the union between the two is most intimate. Is such the union that exists between the divine nature and the human in Jesus Christ? No, this is not the union of two natures, it does not constitute one person, and the bond may be relaxed and loosed. And how often truth departs from the mind!

God pours into His most elect souls the light of truth and the abundance of His Grace without stint or measure. Truth invests the mind and clothes it in its splendors, as does the sun when its rays pass through a cloud and suffuse it with light; so also grace penetrates and transforms the will, lifts it up, makes it prolific and capable of the most sublime and heroic works. Let us suppose that this truth and these effusions of divine grace in a soul go on increasing and ever expanding; let us further suppose that all the graces granted to the angels, to patriarchs and prophets, to martyrs and apostles, and to the Mother of God herself, are united and fused into one grace, and let us suppose that this grace is doubled and centupled a thou-

sand times, aye, a thousand million times, and then that it is all poured into one single soul. Great God, what a miracle of sanctity and perfection! Such a soul ought to possess all treasures of knowledge, of virtue, and of sanctity. In contemplating it we see fading away and disappearing in it all that is human and created, and only the divine appears. Its own being seems less than an imperceptible mote floating in the luminous waves of the sun of day. Is this union such as that existing between the divine nature and the human in the Son of Mary? No, no; if it were Jesus Christ would ever be but a saint, the greatest of saints, a prodigy of virtue and perfection, but still only a man, and nothing more, while faith tells us in clarion tones that He is God. In that case it would not be the Word that is made man, it would be man that is lifted up and brought near to God. The primary being about which all the ocean of light and those perfections are grouped would be a man, and Christ would be but a man.

What sort of a union, then, is this? Is the human nature wholly lost in the divine, as a drop of milk is lost in the ocean, or as a drop of dew is absorbed by the sun? In that case the divine Essence would acquire something not its own and would be changed; the human nature would be annihilated and we should not have a union of two natures; one of them would cease to be, and the

Incarnation and Redemption would be made impossible.

Tell me then, O Faith, how can I form a conception of the union of the divine nature, and the human of my Saviour, Jesus Christ? Speak and I will listen reverently.

I open a page which the Church puts into my hands; it is the Creed of St. Athanasius, and in going through it I come upon these words: *For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.* This symbol of faith, in order to make us understand somewhat of this inaccessible mystery, takes us back to man, an imperfect image to be sure, but withal a most beautiful one of the two great mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Trinity.

And now, O man, fix your mental gaze upon yourself and in your own being you will find shadowed forth the mystery of the human nature with the divine in Christ.

You have a body; with it you see, hear, taste, feel, and touch other bodies; with it you make your thoughts known and your feelings, and you gain a knowledge of all that goes on outside you. This body occupies but a small space; it has, besides the need of food and drink, a thousand other demands; it must cover itself and protect itself from cold and heat. You also have a soul; this soul reasons, discusses, judges, wills, approves, disap-

proves, loves, and hates; it has indeed no need of meat and drink, but it hungers and thirsts insatiably after the true, the beautiful, and the good. The body changes day by day and in a few years you do not possess a single atom of the body you have to-day; but your soul of to-day is in its substance what it was ten, thirty, fifty years ago. Your body, then, and your soul are two substances wholly different; the former is fixed here upon the earth, in a small point of land; the latter roams where it will through the spaces of the heavens, over the wide-stretching waters of the deep, and through vast fields of truth.

You have a body and a soul; now, tell me, are you but one or are you two? You will at once reply: "I am but one, one only, one sole man. I am in the body, and I see, hear, speak, eat, drink, and toil; I am in the soul, and I understand, reason, and will; I distinguish the true from the false, good from evil; I am composite and simple, visible and invisible, limited in a point of space and illimitable; I am mortal and immortal, I am body and spirit, I am one sole indivisible *I, soul and flesh is one man.* My soul pervades my whole body, vivifies it, gives it motion, informs it, is wholly in every part of it, makes it subsist, orders and develops all its members, disposes its admirable mechanism, imprisons within it elements the most unlike, which, without its presence and en-

ergy, like subjects impatient of the yoke, would take wings and fly away."

O man, you are, then, one sole *I* in two substances wholly different; you are wholly in the one and wholly in the other, in a way so stable that no one will ever persuade you that there exists in you a double *I*, a two-fold person, though you have a two-fold substance. And should any one try to persuade you of this your uniform reply would be: "I am but one sole *I* and of this I have the most absolute and the most firm assurance."[1]

Behold then, O man, in yourself an image of the mystery which to-day we celebrate and adore as accomplished in Jesus Christ. The divine Word by an act common to Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost creates out of nothing a soul furnished out with an intelligence, a will, and liberty of its own, so perfect that it transcends the comprehension of men and angels; at the very same instant by His power He forms in the womb of the Virgin a body equally perfect,[2] and unites it to the

[1] It is true, as we know, that in some cases of hypnotism and some paroxysms of fever a strange phenomenon takes place in which there seems to be two persons in the patient; he believes that he has a double personality, the one at times antagonistic to the other. I remember having read in the annals of the Propagation of the Faith instances of this most strange phenomenon in the case of the missionaries attacked by the fever known as the *fever of the forests*. But it is a phenomenon that takes place in an abnormal and diseased condition, never in a normal, and proves nothing.

[2] When I say that the Word assumed a most perfect soul and body I do not mean to exclude those *defects* of body and soul, as St. Thomas calls them, which are inherent both to the one and

soul, and at the same moment the Word takes complete possession of that soul and body, makes them His own and says: "They are Mine! This is My soul, this is My body, and I, who am God with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, am now also man, true God and true man, one sole *I, I* the Son of the Eternal Father, *I*, the Son of Mary!"

There is one thing in this mystery that must be kept always carefully in mind, namely, not to fancy that the body and soul of Christ existed before their union with the Person of the Word; we must scrupulously hold to the formula of St. Leo: "The Word created the soul and formed the body in assuming them, and He assumed them, creating them." Had the soul and body of Christ existed a single instant before the union, the existence of the human person would have been inevitable, and Christ would have been a man joined to God, but not the Man-God; He would have been a man that is raised up to God, but not God that is made man; the human person would have been clothed, encompassed about, with the splendors of the Word, but the Word would then never be able to say: "I and the Father are one."[1] If I may so say, it was necessary that the Word should have anticipated the natural development of the human person in the

to the other, such as passions, instincts, needs, and weaknesses, which belong to human nature. See St. Thomas, p. 3, q. 5, 14, 15, etc.

[1] John x. 30.

assumed nature, taken its place, uniting the two natures in His own Person in such a way that He should be God and at the same time man, as we are corporeal and spiritual, mortal and immortal in the two substances, whence results our nature: *As the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.*[1] The root of the body is the rational soul; the root of the rational soul in Christ is the divine Person of the Word, which pervades both body and soul, possesses them and says: "I am God—I am man." A mystery of union, which has nothing like it either on earth or in heaven, which fills the celestial spirits with amazement, on which are poised all the mysteries of faith, and which, itself incomprehensible, irradiates infinite light upon all the works of God.

In all reverence and fullest faith let us fix our eyes for a few moments upon the Man-God before us. The one divine Person of the Word, who contains within Himself the two natures, pours the measureless ocean of His riches into the assumed nature, so that in the very instant that He touched it and took it to Himself and made it His own it

[1] It is hardly necessary to note that the comparison between the union of the soul with the body does not perfectly correspond to the union of the divine nature with the human in Jesus Christ. The reason is obvious. The soul is an imperfect substance without the body, and the body is still more so without the soul. The one substance is ordained for a union with the other; but this is not so in Christ; the divine nature, the Person of the Word, is most perfect without being united with human nature. This union depends on the divine will; the union of the soul with the body is required by nature itself.

was so filled with them and so overflowing that it could never receive more. The perfection of the soul of Christ could not in the passing of ages increase by one iota; all its capacity was taxed to overflowing. In the very act of being united His intelligence saw everything, comprehended everything, gazed steadily and directly on the sea of the divine Essence and there found its beatitude. Our mind in gaining a knowledge of truth progresses slowly and mounts the ladder of science toilsomely and step by step; the intelligence of Christ mounted up like a flash; there was no doubt, nothing obscure, no progression, no deduction, no new discovery; in a flash it knew all that it was possible to know; there was not in it a single iota or hair's breadth that was in potency and that bided the moment to pass from potency into act.

So also the will of the soul of Christ; in the very instant of union it developed to the full all its ineffable energies and touched the highest possible heights of all virtue and sanctity, so that it could go no higher, for a higher height there was not. A comparison will aid your mind to conceive so great a mystery of perfection.

You hold in the palm of your hand a small seed, for instance, of a cedar of Libanus. In that seed is certainly wrapped up the magnificent tree that will one day rise as a giant upon the brow of that mountain. But how many years, aye, ages must

go by before all the forces contained in that seed are fully developed! How often will the leaves be renewed and the flowers! How much light and dew will it drink in, and how much sap will it absorb from the earth! Which of us could know and compute all its evolutions, commencing from the moment in which it was committed to the earth on to that in which it completes the last development of its potency? Now is it not a fact that the omnipotent God might, by shortening the long and toilsome labor of nature, have in an instant developed the whole potency of that small seed and transformed it into a perfect tree, the very pride of Libanus? Who can doubt it? Now this is what happened in the soul of Christ in the very instant that it was wedded to the Word. Its intelligence and will in an instant flowered and put forth fruit, and developed to the full all their forces under the direct action of the divine Person, and both the one and the other reached in the beatific vision and in the immediate union the uttermost term of all perfection. All the actions of this intelligence and of this will, which are and will ever continue to be human, become divine, since it is always the divine Person who inspires and governs them. The body, the instrument of the soul, receives also, by means of the soul, the immediate action of the divine Word, and, though subject to the weaknesses proper to its being, is still the body of the Word,

and its acts, even the least, are the acts of the Word and rigorously divine—human acts. And since the worth and the merit of acts depend on the person doing them, and since the Person doing them in the human nature of Christ is the Word, the worth and the merit of its acts are divine and infinite. Every act of this blessed babe, every beat of His heart, every sigh, every tear, is sufficient to expiate all the sins of the sons of Adam and to give God an honor worthy of Himself.

O divine Word, who art the full expression of the divine Essence, who art the sovereign archetype of all things, we contemplated and adored Thee in the bosom of the Father! To-day we contemplate and adore Thee in the poor nature Thou didst deign to take to Thyself. Thou art true God, Thou art true man, one sole Christ! We adore Thee on earth as the angels and the blessed do in heaven. O be Thou blessed for all the ages of eternity. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI

Jesus Christ the Pattern of Humility

ONE of the Christian virtues, the necessity of which it is most difficult to bring home to ourselves, because its practice is most difficult, is humility. Chastity, too, is difficult, very difficult, to practise, especially in its highest form, or virginity; but I think I do not err in affirming that humility is still more difficult. Even Paganism had some notion of the excellence of chastity, and appreciated in a confused sort of way the grandeur of virginity, which it admired and praised, and of which it has left us clearly perceptible vestiges. Who does not remember the veneration which Pagan Rome threw about the Vestals? Or who does not call to mind the beautiful words of Tacitus in praise of the virgin Occia; or the immortal and numerous verses of Virgil in which he sings of the beauty of virginity; or those of Euripides, who vividly describes the death of the virgin Polyxena? And yet Paganism knew nothing of humility, rather it had an utter scorn of it; it had not even the conception of what it is, nor a word to express it; for in the beautiful tongue of Latium the word *humilitas* or humility did not express a virtue; it

signified an abject, vulgar, craven mind. Paganism, in the midst of its splendid civilization, in the most glorious days of its greatness, had not even a notion of what the virtue of humility means. Chastity or virginity, as some one has acutely said, is humility of the flesh, and humility is chastity or virginity of the spirit, since as the former keeps in check the disorderly movements of the senses and the rebellion of the flesh, the latter rules and subjects to obedience the inclinations and desires of the spirit. Hence humility is in a sense as much superior to chastity as the spirit is superior to the body. It is, indeed, an arduous task for the spirit to withstand the rebellion of the senses and to reduce the insubordinate flesh to obedience, but how much more arduous is it for the spirit to rule itself, to clip the wings of arrogance and ambition, to crush and root out the vile germ of pride, the beginning of all evil and the root of every apostasy?

To bring home to men the excellence of so exalted a virtue and to get them to love it, it was not enough to inculcate it by the mouth of prophet and saint, nor was it enough even for the Man-God to announce and promulgate it; it was necessary that He Himself should lead the way up this rugged steep and seal His teaching by the example of His entire mortal life, so that He could say: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of

heart. I have given you an example, that as I have done so do you also."

When a general wants to take by assault a position on which the issue of a battle depends, he himself while the conflict is fiercest rushes forward to the head of the troops and by word and example cheers them on and calls upon them to follow him in making the attack. The Son of God and of the virgin Mother does the same; the fortress of pride is to be taken in spite of the desperate resistance of its commander, and Jesus Christ puts Himself at the head of His faithful followers, and armed with humility moves fearlessly on to the assault and gains a most splendid victory.

To-day Jesus Christ comes forth from the spotless womb of the Virgin and for the first time sets His foot upon this earth. He comes down into the great battlefield, and as St. Bernard says, teaches by example what He will later on confirm by word. He teaches mortification, poverty, patience, and all the virtues, but more than all He teaches humility, the foundation of every moral virtue. Let us for a short space of time consider this divine teacher, who, different from the teachers of earth, first does and then teaches by word of mouth, first gives an example and then instructs orally, and let us take His sublime teaching to heart.

Before entering upon our subject it will be well to give an idea of humility, such as the Gospel

presents it to us, and to clear away some prejudices which have obscured it.

Does humility consist in avowing that we are poor, and miserable, and fit for nothing, and worthy only of contempt, and in doing external acts which lead the public to believe that we esteem ourselves despicable and the lowliest of men? No; humility, like any other virtue, does not consist in words and external acts, any more than is a tree valued for its leaves and flowers, but rather for its fruit. A man in speaking may say everything bad of himself; he may publish himself as a great sinner, may do acts by which he humiliates himself and by which he makes a show of despising himself; he may walk barefoot, clothe himself in rough garments, fall upon his knees, beat his breast, kiss a beggar's feet, and yet be the proudest of men. All these acts of humility may be one continuous series of hypocrisies, one continuous mask simulating virtue, a means to gain the good opinion of others, simply a device of pride, and such examples are not new or rare. The Pharisees, who were so often scourged by Our Lord, masked the most shameless pride under the semblance of humility.

Does humility consist in knowing ourselves, our weakness, our lapses, and our nothingness? Assuredly humility requires this knowledge and without it humility is impossible; but this knowledge alone is not Christian humility; it is the root but

not the tree; it is the flower but not the fruit; it is the light but not the heat; it is the means but not the end. Where is the man who, if he interrogates his conscience and goes back through his life, does not know, and as it were touch with his hand his own weaknesses, is not conscious of his own passions, and must not say to himself, "I am a poor sinner"? Where is the man who, if asked, must not confess that, even according to the dictates of reason, of himself he is nothing, that whatever he is or has is the gift of God? The Pagans themselves reached this conclusion, and yet they knew not even the name of humility. My friends, if to know what a virtue is were to possess the virtue itself, nearly all would be virtuous. Where will you find men who do not know what chastity is, or temperance, or justice, or prudence, or the value of sincerity, charity, and the like, and yet are not these very men unchaste, intemperate, unjust, rapacious, imprudent, liars, cruel, selfish? It is clear, then, that a knowledge of ourselves is a necessary condition to humility, but it is not humility itself.

In what, then, does this admirable virtue, of which, as of every other virtue, Jesus Christ is the incomparable model, consist? It consists primarily, as we have said, in a knowledge of ourselves. Have beautiful, good, excellent qualities of mind and heart, of spirit and body, of nature and grace,

been lavished upon us? It would be an outrage against truth not to recognize all this, and humility, like every other virtue, must be founded on truth. Let us recognize all good qualities, but let us give the honor to Him who so prodigally bestowed them upon us and with them gave us also the strength rightly to use them. Have we been but scantily provided or wholly passed over? If so, let us accept our lot without complaining or envying others. Do we find that we are full of defects and faults? Let us confess them in God's sight, avow them to our own conscience, and be resigned to be esteemed by our fellow-men for what we are.

Humility is nothing but truth, neither more nor less; it is to know ourselves as we are in God's sight, to attribute to Him whatever good there is or can be in us, and to ascribe whatever evil we have done to ourselves, or, at least, to be content to be esteemed by men for what we are, whether judged by the light of reason or the light of faith, and to be dealt with accordingly.

Having stated these principles, which are clear both to faith and reason, it is obvious that humility is but the knowledge that of ourselves we are nothing, and an abiding and efficacious disposition and will to be so esteemed. Hence it follows that man does not abase himself by being humble, for how can any one abase himself who of himself is noth-

ing? Strictly speaking only God can abase and humble Himself, since He alone is Being, the center and foundation of all perfection, and the Incarnation is pre-eminently the miracle of His abasement and humiliation. Let us see how this is.[1]

And now let us consider Jesus Christ. Who is He? First of all He is God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, the emanation and splendor of His substance, the brightness of eternal light, the perfect expression of the divine Being; the thought, the idea, the image in which God contemplates Himself; the archetype of all things, created or creatable; the fountain of all truth; the creator and preserver of everything in heaven and on earth;[2] He by a most simple act, common to Him and to the Father and to the Holy Ghost, creates a soul and, in creating, unites it to Himself by the most intimate bond of a personal union. This Son of God, this Word of the Father, He who is eternal, commences another existence in time; He who is immutable becomes mutable; He who is infinite

[1] In matter of fact the lowest degree of the abasement of the Man-God is the Blessed Eucharist, since in this, not only does God hide Himself and disappear from view, but so to say the Man also hides Himself and disappears from view, as we shall see. But given the Incarnation, the Eucharist is possible, and hence I call this the miracle by excellence of the humiliation of God.

[2] To show the humiliation of the divine Word in the Incarnation I should first have shown the greatness of the Word, and this would have brought His abasement out more strikingly, but this I did in the first part of the preceding Discourse, where I professedly speak of Jesus Christ, God.

becomes finite; He who is immense becomes circumscribed; He who is increate abases Himself in the creature. *"He descended from Heaven,"* sings the Church; *"He emptied Himself."*

Had the Word assumed an angelic nature or the human soul alone, and united it personally to Himself, His abasement would have been, not only great, but infinite, since between God and any assumed created nature, even the most noble, the interval is necessarily infinite. But the divine Word went lower than this;[1] He did not assume an angelic nature, nor did He assume a soul alone, but together with the soul and at the same instant He assumed a human body: *And the Word was made flesh.*

In the Hebrew tongue the word *"flesh"* signifies not only the body, but human nature whole and entire; and I think that the Evangelist in this memorable passage used by preference the word *flesh,* not only to affirm the truth that the flesh was assumed, as it was then said by some to be only *apparent* or *celestial,* but also to impress upon us the greatness of the abasement of the divine Word, by naming specifically the inferior part of our

[1] We can not repeat too often that our language when we speak of God is always metaphorical and must be corrected by the mind. God does not *descend,* nor, as is clear, can He descend since He is illimitable. He is said to *descend,* as we understand things, since He makes human nature His own, which, as compared with God, is not only base, but absolutely nothing. In the Incarnation God does not properly speaking *descend;* human nature is raised up or *ascends* by being united with the divine.

nature: *And the Word was made flesh.* Although the soul is created and is, as compared with God, simply nothing, nevertheless it is in its nature incomparably more like to God than the body. It is like God, simple, spiritual, and immortal; it is finite and circumscribed certainly, but not as is the body; it has a certain infinity in its thought which leaps over all barriers of matter; it thinks, it wills, and it is free, and in this respect its likeness to God is especially resplendent. Hence, while the personal union of the Word with the soul would be an infinite abasement, it would never be such as to be compared with that implied in the union of the Word with the body. In the scale of being matter stands at the lowest point; it neither thinks, nor wills, nor is it free; it is inert; it is subject to a thousand transformations; by itself and separate from the soul it does not even feel; it is restricted to a single point; it is essentially *passive;* it is the last echo of created being; it hovers on the edge of non-being; it skirts the uttermost fringe of nothingness; it is not possible to go down lower than matter. Now, my friends, the Person of the Word not only made the soul His own, but going still lower made His own, together with the soul, also the body which belongs to it, and thus united to both He forms one sole being, one sole Person, one sole I: *And the Word was made flesh.* In the human body are contained all the principal

elements dispersed throughout all matter,[1] hence the Word by His union with the human body united to Himself the flower of all matter, the first fruits of the universe, and diffused everywhere the springs of His divine life.

And what sort of a body did the Word assume? Certainly He could have taken to Himself a glorious body, impassible, immortal, spiritual, as St. Paul calls it; a body exempt from all natural ills and weaknesses, as was His after the Resurrection.[2] In so doing the Word would have abased Himself even to the very depths of the created, but in His body, although truly a body, He would not have suffered hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue and weariness, and all the weaknesses inseparable from human nature in the present condition of things. But this He did not wish to do. He would have a body such as ours, which, because it was incomparably more perfect and delicate than ours, was also incomparably more liable and more sensitive to pain than ours. He suffered hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue and weariness; He was subject to all weaknesses, except

[1] Science tells us that there are seventeen elements of matter in the structure of the human body, the principal of these being oxygen, hydrogen, calcium, nitrogen, etc., which are also the elements which for the most part, as the latest inductions of science tell us, go to make up not only our globe, but the whole universe.

[2] "*It shall rise a spiritual body*" (1 *Cor.* xv. 44). A spiritual body, if the word be taken literally, seems a contradiction; but the word *spiritual* here refers, not to the nature, but to the endowments or qualities.

those that are the consequence of the disorders of sin. Outwardly as regards the body there was not the slightest difference between His and that of the lowliest of the sons of Israel.

He might, at least, have taken to Himself a body in the full vigor of its powers, such as was the body of the first man, that knew not infancy nor childhood. In doing so He would have escaped all the sufferings and sorrows that necessarily accompany the first and quite lengthy period of life. And as to this period of life we should not lose sight of the vast difference there is between Jesus Christ and other men. The ordinary babe suffers indeed from the first instant of his existence in his mother's womb, on until the time when he arrives at the use of reason and full consciousness of himself, and he suffers greatly because of the conditions imposed by nature, but of this suffering he has no consciousness, and for this reason it is not real suffering; but it was quite otherwise with Jesus Christ. From the first instant of His conception He had the most perfect use of reason and knew everything with a clearness that never increased one iota. And since He had this most perfect knowledge from the first moment of His human existence, it necessarily follows that He was fully conscious of all the privations and sorrows that accompany that state. Who can say what He suffered in the prison of His mother's womb, and

during the years of His infancy and childhood, unable, as he was, to move, or to articulate a word, or to prevent annoyance, or to make known His wants, and forced, as every other child, wholly to submit to the will of another? What a life of pain and inexpressible anguish! It is easier to imagine it than to express it in words. And Jesus would have all this in order to be in everything like unto us during the period of His physical development, even at the cost of enduring, unknown to all, an unspeakable martyrdom, which we escape. The infinite greatness and the sovereign perfection of the humanity of Christ served only to make His condition immeasurably more painful, and yet He would not have it otherwise, as He might have done, had He seen fit to assume an adult human nature such as was that of Adam.

And not only did the Word not wish to assume a glorious human nature, nor one already fully developed, as was that of the first man, but He went still lower; He took unto Him a nature which, as St. Paul says, had all the appearance of sin: *In the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin.* God, as you know, hates, detests, abominates sin. As light puts to flight darkness, as life is an enemy of death, as truth necessarily drives error before it, so does God essentially cast sin out from Himself; by His very nature He hates it and will everlastingly hate it. And now what happens in the mystery of the

Incarnation? The Word takes upon Himself human nature, as it appeared after the sin of Adam, a nature fallen, corrupt, sinful. Could the Son of God have submitted to a humiliation greater than this? To be weak and mortal and subject to all the privations and all the pains and sorrows of human nature is indeed a great, a very great humiliation; but that He, God, the Saint of saints, the implacable enemy, the inexorable punisher of sin, should appear as a sinner in the eyes of God and man, is what the mind of man can not and never will be able to comprehend. God becomes not only a man but a sinner, in so far as He took upon Himself the penalty of man's sin! And yet this is what St. Paul solemnly affirms in the strongest words, and upon these words I beg you to meditate: "*Him, who knows no sin, He hath made sin for us.*"[1] My friends, I confess I can not think of this audacious expression of St. Paul without shuddering: *He hath made sin.*

Jacob is a figure of the elect, Esau of the reprobate. Esau was a man of brute force and violent; his hands and neck and breast were covered with hair like a savage or a beast of the forest. One day the mother of these sons wished that Jacob,

[1] 1 Cor. v. 21. In Sacred Scripture sin sometimes means the *punishment* of sin, and also the victim or the offering for sin. Such is the meaning of the word in this passage. Jesus Christ is made *sin* in that He bears the sins of all, is the victim for the human race, expiates in Himself the sins of all, and the punishment due to us falls upon Him.

her most loved child, should take the semblance of Esau; she covered his arms and hands and neck with the skins of young kids, the symbol of the reprobate, and conducted him to the feet of Isaac to receive his last blessing. Jacob is become Esau; so also Jesus Christ, the true Jacob, in assumed human nature, is transformed into Esau and is become a sinner. The voice reveals what is not seen, that is, the hidden divine nature; the voice is ever the voice of Jacob, it is the Son of God; but the hands, or that which is seen and touched, are the hands of Esau; that which is seen, that which is visible to the eyes of all, is the sinner.

Now, my friends, I will ask you to enter for a little while into the heart of this Jacob, transformed into Esau.

As we have said, He had an infinite horror of sin; the sight of it alone filled Him with anguish and, if it were possible, would have caused Him to die of grief; and yet He sees Himself clothed in the vesture of a sinner: *In the likeness of sin.* He sees Himself become, not a lamb, but a kid, aye, made sin: *He hath made sin.* He sees the vast torrent of sin, beginning with Adam and going on expanding as the centuries go by and forming a measureless ocean in which all generations were shipwrecked; and He sees this ocean of iniquity of every kind all poured out upon Himself; He sees it all made His own in that He voluntarily of-

fers to expiate it all in Himself; He feels almost crushed under its measureless weight; He sees Himself become an object of horror and of abomination to earth, to heaven and to Himself, transformed as He is into the greatest of sinners: *The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;* and therefore worthy of being punished and contemned. Who can even dimly conceive the shame that mantles His countenance, the anguish that harrows His breast, the infinite humiliation that prostrates and crushes His spirit?

The Word was made man; it came down even to the lowliness of matter, assuming a body weak, infantile, passible, a body that had all the semblance of sin, upon which was visited all the iniquities of the earth. At least such abasement ought, it should seem, to have been made up for by some external splendor, greatness, and glory; the Word ought to have appeared before the world as the son of a king, as the descendant of men whose deeds of prowess and whose intellectual achievements had shed a ray of glory upon their name. True, He is the Son of a mother who is a virgin, a miracle the like of which the earth had never seen; but who knew this? The Mother had for her faithful companion and spouse the blessed Joseph; still the world looked upon their Son as it might upon any other of the sons of men. He is the Son of a mother sprung from a race of kings, a descendant

of David and Solomon, but neither the world nor even His own countrymen knew this. She is indeed the daughter of kings, but fallen, and she is obliged to live by her own labor and that of Joseph, her spouse. All that remained to her and her Son of the noble blood and the splendor of her ancestors was the humiliation that is the accompaniment of departed greatness.

The people pointing to the Babe said, what later on they said in accents of complacent contempt and scorn: "Is not this the Son of Joseph, the carpenter? Are not His Mother and His brethren and sisters here in our midst? He, the God-Man, who sees all and is all powerful, hears Himself called the son of a carpenter!" And yet He is silent, conceals His origin, drinks day by day of the chalice of humiliation; He is neglected, thrust aside, despised, and held by all to be the son of a poor workman! Great God, what a depth of humiliation! The mind is bewildered and feels the need of taking refuge in faith, which alone can enable it to bear up under so severe a trial.

In the eyes of the world He is thought to be simply an ordinary babe, and to differ in nothing from other babes; He is thought to have a common origin with them and to be the son of a workman. And where did He open His eyes to the light? In a royal palace? No. In a stately mansion? No. At any rate, in the humble dwelling of His father

at Nazareth—it is, to be sure, but a miserable cottage, but at least it is His own? No. He so disposes things that He is constrained to see the light of day on a journey, which His Mother is forced to undertake by the decree of a Pagan and foreign monarch, and during that journey He is born in the heart of winter and at dead of night.

But surely some compassionate soul will give the Mother a shelter and offer her the hospitality of a friendly roof. She finds herself in the city of David and it can not be that the citizens of Bethlehem will not vie with one another in opening their doors to this daughter of David, who comes on a pilgrimage to the land of her fathers. But no, not a single door is opened to welcome this pilgrim from Nazareth, this daughter of David, and her spouse; for them there is no place of refuge, no poor shelter in the public inn, no place at the caravansary.

The Son of God, even before being born, can find no place on which to lay His head; He is repulsed from a public inn, and in His own country as night was coming on He is thrust out on the public highway. His Mother and St. Joseph go wandering here and there in search of shelter, of some poor cabin, and they can find only a stable, and in that stable the Son of God makes His entrance into the world. He descends from the bosom of the Father to the womb of the Virgin, from heaven to earth;

the Holy One takes on the semblance of a sinner; the Master of all things is destitute of everything; from a throne of glory He comes into a stable and is laid in a manger on a little straw! I ask you, my friends, could the Word descend to a lower depth? Let me put a question to you all. As I look round this temple I see it filled to overflowing with people, who silently and devoutly listen to me; you who are gathered here to-day joyfully to celebrate with me the birth of Jesus Christ number some thousands; among you I see a few of the wealthy, not many; I see also a good number of those who are in easy circumstances and others fairly well-to-do, but the bulk of you live by the labor of your hands, the noblest of all conditions. Among you there are certainly some poor, aye, wretched, who it may be have not a roof to cover them or a miserable bed of straw to lie on, and to-day know not where they will find bread to appease their hunger to-morrow. Now, think you, if I should ask those poor and wretched who are mingled with you, one by one, would I find any, a single one, who could say: "I was born in a stable? My mother was so poor that as soon as I was born she placed me on a bed in a manger, because no one could be found who in charity would give me a shelter"? No, no, there is not a single one among you who was ever reduced to poverty like to that of Jesus; not one of you who was born in

a stable, and rejected by all as was the Son of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Truly did He annihilate Himself, taking the form of a servant and making Himself like unto men: "*He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man.*"[1]

And yet, though this seems the last extreme, the humiliations of the Word, made man, did not stop here; later on they increased beyond measure and reached an excess that transcends all human conception. We shall see Him pass from the stable of Bethlehem to the judgment-hall of Pilate, from the poverty of the crib to the nakedness of Golgotha, from the abandonment in which He was born to the anguish, the agonies, the unspeakable infamies of His death on the Cross. And in His infinite wisdom and power He will find a means to descend even lower than His death on the Cross, by perpetuating and enlarging in marvelous ways His concealment, His humiliations, and His life of sacrifice in His eucharistic life.

This is the uttermost limit both of His humiliations and of His love. But how was all this series of astounding abasements of the Word made flesh, beginning in the cave of Bethlehem and thence going onward to Calvary and from Calvary onward again until the last day of the world, made possible? What was its beginning and its orig-

[1]Philip, ii. 7.

inal source? Let us acknowledge it—it was the Incarnation. Had the Word not become man, man like unto us, in all except sin, He would not have suffered, nor would He have been nailed to the Cross, nor would He have died in a very flood of sorrow and abuse, nor would He have hidden Himself under the species of bread and wine, nor, in a word, would He have descended to the depths to which we have seen Him descend. Hence, it is only the naked truth to say that the Incarnation of the Word contains in itself all the abasements and all the humiliations of His entire life. It is only the truth to say that Jesus Christ on this day, on which He appeared on earth as man, presents Himself to us as the sovereign model of humility.

Full of faith, let us prostrate ourselves before this Babe, adore Him, thank Him, and bring home to our hearts that in the measure in which we are lifted up, in the same measure was He abased, for it is the common opinion of the Fathers that He became man that we might become gods: *Filius Dei factus est homo ut nos Dei efficeremur.*

DISCOURSE VII

Jesus Brought Virginity upon Earth

THE sun is visible everywhere and at every instant in the firmament; it diffuses its light and pours out its vivifying heat equally everywhere and always. And if at times its light seems to be less bright and dazzling, and its heat less ardent than at others, and if both seem now and then to increase and diminish and to be almost extinguished, you all know that this is not the fault of the sun, which is ever the same, but is to be ascribed to causes, familiar to every one, which need not be enumerated here. The same is true of Him whom Holy Writ calls the Sun of Eternal Justice, the Son of God and of the Virgin. At all times and in every place, in as far as it depends on Him, He pours out in equal measure His light, which is the life of the intellect, and His grace, which is the life of the heart; He pours out both the one and the other in heaven, illuminating, sanctifying, and gladdening the angels, and He pours out both on earth, enlightening the mind and warming the hearts of men, who are ready to welcome these gifts; He pours them out at the dawn and in the morning of His mortal life, when He is midway in His course, and when at the close of

day He suffers an eclipse upon the Cross. The light that He pours out is the truth, which He is announcing in every possible way, at all times and to all, whether He speaks or is silent, whether He is fulfilling the mission of an apostle or discharging the duties of a workman, whether startling the mutitude by His prodigies or living quietly in a remote corner of Galilee. And to-day let us contemplate this divine babe, lying upon His bed of straw at Bethlehem, unknown to the world and surrounded by rough shepherds. He, the eternal Word of the Father, teaches not by the sound of the human voice that passes away, but by works that endure. From the pulpit of His crib, in comparison of which all the chairs of the greatest philosophers that ever lived are as nothing, He preaches all the most sublime virtues, and those especially that are most hateful to our pride and most trying to our weakness. In a former Discourse we saw that this heavenly babe is a most perfect marvel of humility, and to-day it is my purpose to show you that He is the sovereign model of another virtue, never dissociated from humility, namely, purity, and purity in its highest form, or virginity.

And first we will touch upon the nature and the essence of this virtue, and next, lifting up our eyes, we shall endeavor to contemplate it in Jesus Christ, begotten in the bosom of the Father, and

in Jesus Christ, begotten in the womb of the Mother, and, finally, in Jesus Christ begetting it in the sons of men, and making it the most beautiful ornament of His spouse, the Church. The subject is a most exalted one and worthily to speak of it would require the tongue of an angel; but when my feeble mind goes astray or my words fail your attention will supply, and we may both be assured that we shall best appreciate this most divine of virtues when we feel and avow that we are wholly incapable of discoursing upon it as it deserves.

Purity! Virginity! Wonderful words and wonderful ideas! Any one on hearing these words uttered forms to himself some notion of them, but it is so high, so mysterious, so vast, and so delicate that it is difficult to enter into its meaning. Which of us does not know what the light is that floods earth and heaven, scintillates in the stars, smiles in the flowers, and produces the endless variety of brilliant colors that embellish the earth? And yet which of us could say what this light is in itself? We all admire it, speak in praise of its beauty and power, but to say what it is in itself is quite another thing; the same is to be said of purity, and of its most exalted form, virginity. It is the full flower of every chaste thought and affection, of every desire and pleasure, even of those permissible though less beautiful; it is a sort of cleanliness and spotlessness of mind, heart, and

body, which no words can describe; it is like a limpid and serene sky, like a dazzling flower whose leaves, ever fresh and fragrant, delight the eyes and are grateful to the sense of smell; it is a bright and polished mirror that reflects a beautiful and living image; it is like a fountain of clear and tranquil water in the bottom of which every smallest fiber of grass may be seen; it is a brilliant diamond that sparkles in the light of the sun, it is the purity of the lily and the whiteness of snow; it is the sweet and winsome smile that lights up the eyes and beams in the countenance of a child, whom the breath of the world has not yet saddened and who is happily ignorant of evil; it is the smile of the angels and a reflection of God's own beauty; it is the brightness with which light clothes itself; it is everything that can be imagined most beautiful, most sweet, most lovable, most pure and precious on earth and in heaven; it is something that transcends every created mind and on which God fixes His gaze and finds there His purest joys.

And now let us consider this virgin purity in Jesus Christ, who is begotten in the bosom of the Father before all time. The *virgin Christ,* says St. Bonaventure. My friends, lift up your eyes, illuminated by faith, and fix them on that interminable ocean of divine Being, which is of itself, which is before all being, which is the beginning and the

foundation of all being, which is ever giving out and never receiving aught, which changes and is not changed, which is most simple and most perfect. He from the very depths of His being brings forth an *image* of Himself, in everything equal to Himself, co-eternal, most simple and immutable, an *idea,* a *thought,* substantial and subsisting, in which all His being is in action, in which and by which He knows Himself and all things He does and can do. This is the Son, the Word of the Father, equal to the Father and inseparable from Him, who comes to us to-day in the vesture of our human nature, and in everything like to us, save in sin and its defects. The Father is the sun, the Word is the light; the Father is the fountain, the Son is the brook; the Father is the root, the Son is the tree; He is the brightness of eternal light, the pure image, the figure of His essence; the thought, the wisdom, the sovereign archetype, by which He thinks and creates all things, just as you by your thought do all things that you do. Look upon this Word of the Father, and see in Him, in as far as it is given to our weakness to do so, the ineffable pattern of all purity and virginity. *The Son of virginity. The shrine of Christ in the Father was divinity,* as St. Ambrose beautifully and eloquently says;[1] He emanates perennially from the Father, light from light; He is one with

[1]Filius virginitatis! Sinus Christi erat in Patre divinitas.

Him, distinct from Him, yet not separated or separable; two Persons in one sole substance, one sole substance in which blossom these two sempiternal flowers, the Father and the Son, which are interwoven with a third, the Holy Ghost, in whom the whole cycle of the divine life is completed.

What can be purer or more virginal than the divine Essence, which is all most luminous light and indivisible? Well, then, this is the ineffably mysterious womb of the divine Word, whom we adore to-day in His assumed human nature: *The shrine of Christ in the Father was divinity.*

Would you have a faint image, but still only an image, the best possible to us, of this deep mystery? Enter into yourselves; the thought that leaps up in your mind, is it distinct from the mind itself? Assuredly it is. How does it come out from the mind? Does it separate from it, as the fruit is detached from the branch? No, it emanates from your mind, but it abides in it; it stands out before it like a mirror, in which it sees itself and all it thinks and knows. Does the mind experience any effort or pain in the most simple and most rapid act by which it begets its thought? No; there is neither effort nor pain; the mind in generating and bringing forth remains entire and intact, as the thought, its birth, is entire and intact. Jesus Christ, as God, is the thought of the Father, one single thought, since He comprehends all

thoughts and is adequate to all: He is the Virgin by excellence, brightness itself, and beauty and integrity: *The shrine of Christ in the Father was divinity.*

We have seen in Christ, the Word of the Father, the pattern, the fountain of all purity and virginity, and now let us see the same in the Mother: *The shrine of Christ in the Father was divinity, in the Mother virginity.*

There are two generations of the Word: the first as God in the bosom of the Father; the second as man in the womb of Mary. It is clear to all and needless to prove that the second should be, in as far as this is possible, like to the first; this the honor both of the Father and of the Mother required, and so also did the respect which the Son owed to Himself require it. The bosom of the Mother was to be the throne, the abode, the cot, the new paradise of the Word made man. Where shall I find words to describe in a feeble way the infinite beauty of that Virgin, the Son of a virgin? Where shall I find images to enable both you and myself to raise our minds to such a height of beauty?

The eternal Father produces of Himself His Word, in all things equal to Him, and He deposits Him in the immaculate womb of the Virgin, so that, as He has a Father according to the divine nature, so shall she be His true mother according to the human. There is a flower that, warmed by

the rays of the sun, puts forth leaves of the most dazzling colors and diffuses its sweet fragrance about; night rending its veil lets fall upon it drops of purest dew, which sparkle as diamonds in the light of the dawning sun and wholly penetrate and saturate it. A gentle breeze, gathering under its wings a priceless seed from a far-off country, invisibly drops it on that flower, which thus marvelously fecundated brings forth in its calyx a fruit, the fruit of life, delightful to look upon and sweet to the taste. The flower is the Blessed Virgin; the dew is the grace poured out upon her in limitless measure; the sun that warms it is the Holy Ghost; the divine germ deposited in the flower is the very Word of the Father, who becomes for us the fruit of life.

Does the fruit that is formed and matures on the flower by the hidden process of nature harm the plant that produces it, or do the plant and the flower lessen the worth of the fruit? Rather each in turn increases the beauty and the worth of the others, and while the plant gives life to the fruit and ripens it, the fruit in turn is the glory and the ornament of the plant. So also the Virgin in generating the Son of God is thereby beautified, and the divine Word in becoming her Son loses nothing of the brightness of His light, just as the sun loses nothing of its light when it is clothed in a luminous cloud.

Here is a crystal, say; now let a ray of light shine upon and invest it round about; what happens? The ray colors the crystal, which seems transformed into light and in refracting the light dissolves it into all the hues of the rainbow. Is the ray of light broken? Does it lose any of its beauty? It remains just what it is, for it can not change its nature, nor can it in any way be the least tarnished, and far from injuring the crystal in passing through it, it beautifies it and clothes it with its own tints. So also the divine Word, in assuming our human nature in the Virgin, remains always the divine Word, the brightness of eternal light, and, if I may so say, clothes Himself with our hues, or takes on our human semblance.

Note what takes place in yourselves and try to apprehend what took place in the Word when He became man. You have, say, within you, in your soul, in the firmament of your mind, a thought that shines out there like a star in the heavens. Who sees it as long as it shines shut up in your mind? No one, save God and yourselves. You could keep it forever hidden within you, if you so willed, and the world would never know of its existence. But a moment comes when you wish to make it known to others, to every one, and what do you do? You lay hold on the thought, clothe it in the sound of a word or in some other sign, and your thought, so robed and, as it were,

incarnated in that word or sign, issues forth from the mind, yet all the while it is there, and becomes manifest and known to all who desire to know it. What can be purer or more unsullied than your thought, the mysterious production of your mind? It is most chastely wedded to your word, or to the sign chosen and used by you, and without leaving you, it has gone out from you. Is the thought changed? Is it lessened or stained by contact with the sound or sign? Has it lost a particle of what it was? Assuredly not. This is a living and beautiful image of the divine Word, who in making Himself man in the womb of Mary has still preserved all His original beauty, His most perfect nature, His entire virginity, and that of His mother. Let us repeat again the phrase of St. Bonaventure: *The shrine of Christ in the Father was divinity, in the Mother virginity.* Jesus Christ is a virgin in the bosom of the Father, a virgin in the womb of the Mother; the son of the eternal Intellect, in heaven He has no mother; the Son of a virgin here below, he has no earthly father. Ever the glorious sun, glowing with purest light, that increases not and does not diminish, He veils Himself in the subtile cloud of our nature, swathes Himself with it, pervades it through and through; He covers Himself with it to temper His rays, too brilliant and dazzling for us to endure.

St. John tells us that the divine Word is light, and light such that He has not in Him a trace or speck of darkness: *God is light and in Him there is no darkness,*[1] and therefore is He virginity itself. Now the nearer light approaches to an object the more lightsome it makes it, because it imparts to it more of itself; similarly, the nearer the divine Word approaches a creature the more beautiful, pure, and virginal He makes it. To no creature did the divine Word approach as closely as to the Virgin Mary, since he deigned to be her Son and to make Himself, as man, consubstantial with her; hence He made her a virgin in a sense incomparably higher than He did any other creature in heaven or on earth. Listen to the sublime words that the Church puts into the mouth of a virgin martyr, whose portrait St. Ambrose has drawn for us in colors of the most glowing verse; these words throw a wondrous light upon the truth I am endeavoring to set forth: "Christ is my lover, His mother is a virgin, His Father knoweth not a woman. If I love Him I shall be chaste, if I touch Him I shall be clean, if I embrace Him I shall be a virgin indeed." It is not possible to express so exalted a truth more delicately or more clearly. When, then, the divine Word, the exhaustless fountain of purity, the primal source of virginity, took up His abode within the bosom of

[1] 1 John i. 5.

Mary, and took of her our semblance and became her true Son, she reached the highest degree of purity, the uttermost limit of spotlessness; in that instant she was more virginal than ever she had been before; in that instant, in which she received within her the infinite light and purity of the Word He clothed her about and pervaded her as the sun invests and penetrates a cloud, making it luminous and purpling it with its own light; in that instant the ineffable virginity of the Father was interwoven with that of the Virgin Mother, heaven and earth touched and the King of virgins, the Man-God, the Lily of the Valley, burst into leaf and flower. Then a new field opened upon the world and a countless army of generous souls followed Christ, attracted by the fragrance of His virginity, and upon their lips resound a canticle it is not given to others to sing.

Even before the coming of Christ here and there among the chosen people, and even among Pagans, were heard ever and anon voices that faintly praised virginity, and there were facts that showed an appreciation of its excellence and foretold in a confused way its triumph; these were but the far-away dawn, presaging the splendors of the day, a few scattered flowers, announcing the coming spring in all its pageant of color and sweet-smelling fragrance.

The great prophet Isaias was a virgin; Isaias

prophesied the virgin Mother; the inspired writer of the Book of Wisdom cries out: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men." Jepthe thought he could offer to God no greater sacrifice than the preservation of the virginity of his daughter.

Outside Israel virginity had numerous admirers and here and there at long intervals one who practised it. The poets of Greece and Rome sing its praises in matchless verse; almost divine honors were paid to the Vestals who guarded the sacred fire; Tacitus eulogized the virgin Occia; all peoples ancient and modern, civilized and uncivilized, both in the East and in the West, all without exception, ever felt a mysterious and instinctive respect and veneration for virginity and saw in it something of the supernatural and the divine. This feeling, indistinct yet profound and humanly inexplicable, which inspired all peoples to honor virginity and hedge it round about with a sacred veneration, increased and became more vivid as the time approached when He was to come whom the Church salutes as the *Spouse of virgins.* It was the sun sending before him the first streaks of the dawn; it was the earth offering its first fruits to the cultivators; it was a zephyr laden with perfume announcing to men their approach to a garden filled with flowers. Virginity, St. Ambrose says, I know

not where, is like to a sweet-smelling balsam enclosed in a vase; its presence is not known nor is it even suspected, except by the fragrance that escapes from the vase. The vase is discovered and opened and an odoriferous perfume fills the room and rejoices all who are there. Virginity before the coming of Christ was scarcely divined; it was a perfume shut up in a vase; but when Christ was born of a virgin the vase was uncovered and its delicious fragrance swept over all the earth; men were in admiration of it and entered upon a new way of life, drawn by its sweet aroma.

Jesus Christ entered into the world and there gathered about Him an army of virgins; Mary, His mother, led the van; Joseph, John the Precursor, the sinless martyrs, John the evangelist, and many of the apostles, formed the first band, and after them the number of virgins that filled the world was beyond all count. We may divide them into three great troops, which correspond to the various conditions of time and society.

In the first troop we see marching on the virgin martyrs, who entwined the lily and the rose and bore in their right hands palms of victory. Traverse in imagination the history of the Church from the days of Christ to our own. In all ages, but especially in those nearest to Christ, you see the children of the Church put to the severest tests. Who does not know of the terrible persecutions of

the first ages that flooded the cradle of the Church with blood? Who does not remember the awful trials to which believers, and especially those of the weaker sex, were put? They were required either to abjure their faith or to sacrifice their lives, and instances were not rare in which tender maidens, just baptized, were given the alternative of surrendering either their virginity or their lives. What a trial! The world was stupefied at seeing these young girls leaping into the fire, bending their necks to the sword of the executioner, going down into the arena and facing hungry, wild, raging beasts, allowing themselves to be barbarously scourged and remaining unterrified under the awful lacerations inflicted with combs of steel, red-hot plates of iron, and other frightful instruments of torture, too many to enumerate, all the while tranquil and blessing God; and all this they endured rather than suffer any outrage to their persons or the loss of their virginity. Whence, my friends, came this wonderful transformation? Only yesterday the Pagan world was given over to every sort of lechery, wallowing in the mire of every sort of filth, shamelessly running after the foulest orgies, until it seemed to have lost all semblance of reserve and shame, and to-day we see rising out of this foul marsh flowers of dazzling beauty virgins who coupled with the whiteness of innocence unexampled and unheard-of-heroism

and the glory of martyrdom. How did this sudden and miraculous change come about in human nature and especially in the weaker and more timid sex? How came there to rise up out of all that Pagan filth those sublime types of purity and virginity, such as the Agneses and the Agathas, the Cecilias and the Catherines, the Euphemias, the Martinas, the Blandinas, and thousands of others? Who brought upon earth the knowledge and love of this virtue? Who put into the hearts of those timid young girls the heroic courage that made them prefer to give up life, honors, and all else rather than sacrifice their virginity? It was Jesus Christ, the Leader, the Spouse of virgins, who to-day is born in Bethlehem; it was He who brought into being this new generation of virgins and martyrs. It began with Him, it is perpetuated by Him, and as long as His name shall be pronounced on the earth there will always be souls ready and willing to renew in themselves these miracles of virtue and heroism.

The ages of the persecutions passed away, the blood of martyrs was no longer poured out, or only at rare intervals and in the far-away countries; but the race of virgins went on spreading and spreading until they covered the earth, and if they no longer purpled the lily with their bodily blood, they embellished it with a moral martyrdom, a martyrdom of spirit, which in the eyes of faith

and reason is not less glorious than the martyrdom of blood.

Multitudes of virgins, men and women, turned their backs on the world; some buried themselves in the depths of the desert; others hid away in solitary valleys and in wild forests; others again withdrew to the sides of mountains and to the crests of hills; while still others shut themselves up in silent cloisters within the very heart of populous cities. There they lived and by silence, prayer and abstinence, by meditation, by the discipline of the cloister, and by every manner of means sought only to curb the flesh and to preserve inviolate the flower of their virginity. From these peaceful retreats there went up to Heaven, like the smoke of incense, one continuous prayer, and all over the earth was diffused the sweet fragrance of a life more angelic than human; here the world might see an image of heaven. Such is the virginity that flowers in solitude and that constitutes one of the marvels of the Church of Christ, the virginity that is crowned by the voluntary and moral martyrdom of an entire life, a perpetual reminder, a silent reproach, a sublime lesson to a corrupt world.

And what a sight meets our eyes during the last two centuries and especially in our own day! We gaze in amazement upon another manifestation of the Spirit of Christ; upon another spectacle, which

in some respects is more glorious than even the others which virginity presents.

Having strengthened itself by blood in the days of persecution and having made glad by its fragrance monasteries and solitudes, virginity walks boldly forth into the midst of the world. Covered with a rough habit and a veil of white or black, with a rosary bound round their waists, crowds of men, and still more of women, enter into hospitals, orphanages, refuges, and houses of pain and suffering, into schools, infant asylums, and workshops; they take passage in steamers, cross seas, traverse islands and continents, announcing the glad tidings of the Gospel everywhere, spreading everywhere the only true civilization of Christ, seeking out and gathering together abandoned children, opening houses for sufferers of every class, wiping away tears, soothing those in pain, and with a smile on their lips and gladness in their hearts enduring a moral martyrdom in pestilential climes, far from the roof under which they were born, victims of charity, rejoicing that even their names are unknown to the world.

My friends, these are the manifestations, the expressions of virginity. Contemplate once more that endless army of virgins of both sexes, which has permeated and leavened all Christian society, which with indomitable fortitude continues its conquests, which transforms pagan nations, bar-

barous peoples, and savage tribes, which no power can arrest, which, changeless in itself, takes on all forms and appears wherever there are needy to be succored, or pain to be assuaged, or minds to be enlightened, or hearts ulcerated by sorrow to be comforted. This army of virgins that fills space and time, whence has it its origin? Where did it first raise its banner? Who formed it, who filled it with that sacred fire and divine enthusiasm that make it come victorious out of the most relentless trials? You know; I have told you, and I repeat, it is the work, the creation of Jesus Christ, whom St. Ambrose calls the *Son of Virginity,* who as God has no mother, is begotten of the Father *from eternity,* and who in time is the *son of a virgin.* He and only He is the Father of this race of virgins, which is the strength and the life of the Catholic Church, which is the glory of humanity, which is a ray of perennial light upon this earth, the very smile of the everlasting beauty of heaven.

DISCOURSE VIII

The Babe Jesus Solves the Question of Rich and Poor

I AM very well aware that many scientists regard the mysteries of our faith as very obscure, as insoluble riddles, utterly useless, harmful to science, both humiliating and an affront to our reason. The very word "mystery," if it does not bring a smile of pity and scorn to their lips and cause them to break out into blasphemous imprecations, at least offends and irritates them. They would banish all mystery from religious teaching, as if the world were not full of mysteries and as if all the positive sciences were not based on truths and facts, known indeed, but the intrinsic nature of which is always more or less shrouded in the shadows of mystery.[1] We see the trees, magnificent in their foliage, but their roots are hidden from us; we see the palace, but not its foundation; the eye sweeps over an immense expanse of ocean, but can not penetrate into its depths. So also is it and must it be with regard to

[1]All the natural sciences are concerned with things or facts, whose nature is as yet for the most inexplicable. Electricity, attraction, heat, light, and all the elements are themselves very well known and so also are the laws governing them; but what are they in themselves? Mysteries. Their existence is known and so also many of their laws; but not their intrinsic nature—not yet.

the teachings of faith; one part of them is seen, is clearly known, and is almost within reach of the hand; but the more exalted parts, the most sublime aspects of them, are, like the roots of trees, the foundations of houses, and the depths of the sea, hidden from our gaze, but what is seen is a pledge and a sure proof of what does not appear. The mysteries of faith are, for all that, truths that are most certain, partly known and partly hidden, like those mountains whose sides and bases are covered with a dense mist, while their peaks are flooded with light. Mysteries, in as far as they are known, are shining lighthouses which God has set up at intervals along the ocean shore, in order that those who are buffeted by its turbulent waves may be able to find the port, guide their vessel thither, and anchor there in safety. The mystery of faith and love which the Church brings before us to-day, the mystery of the birth of the Son of God according to the flesh, is one of those luminous beacons. The destinies of the entire human family are grouped about the cradle of the divine babe and from it a torrent of light goes out illuminating the past and the future of the race. Any one who knows how to reason can find in the life of Christ which begins to-day the fullest solution of all the most difficult problems of human life, of all the riddles of history, and of all the most formid-

able questions that disquiet individuals and convulse nations.

Our age, beyond all the ages of the past, may be called the age of questions. There are political questions, scientific questions to no end, financial questions, literary questions, and, in spite of the world's vaunted indifference, it is filled with religious questions, and of all these, not to speak of others, men are seeking a solution or rejoicing in having found one. But of all questions there is one which to-day, more than at any time in the past, looms up as both practical and formidable. And what is this question? It is the question of the workman, the social question, or, if you will, the question of rich and poor. It is silently, secretly working its way, growing larger and more threatening from day to day, and may yet set the world in a flame.

This is a great question and essentially a moral one, and it was solved by the divine Teacher, who began His teaching to-day in the cave of Bethlehem. He teaches us first, that poverty is not in itself an evil; nay more, He sanctifies it in His own person, and He comes to us not only as its teacher and its pattern, but also as the comforter and consoler of the poor; and next, He teaches us how those of the upper and middle classes should conduct themselves in dealing with the poor. These are the two very simple truths, suggested to me

by to-day's mystery, which I shall undertake to develop and which, if they are at all times well worthy your attention, are much more so at this day.

All men may be divided into two great classes, the rich and the poor. Among the rich I include also those who, though not possessing great fortunes, have health and strength and brain, and with the aid of these and by industry earn what is necessary to live decently and comfortably. Assuredly a man who can provide for himself is not poor. What matters it that he does not possess fields and houses and workshops and bonds and merchant vessels on the seas, and is not able to say that all these are earning for him while he sleeps and enjoys himself? He can still say: "I have these strong arms and this intellect, which God has given me, and which are in very truth my own; with them I can earn a living as well as can those who have houses and fields and a large bank account, and I need not ask any man for aid." The poor are those who, from whatever cause, are not able to provide for themselves and the needs of their families, and are obliged to appeal to others for assistance. Now what happens? What must necessarily happen as regards these two classes, the rich and the poor?

The poor look upon the rich and seeing them lodged in magnificent houses, driving in splendid

equipages, handsomely and richly dressed, dining sumptuously and enjoying an abundance of everything, naturally feel rising in their hearts envious and jealous thoughts; they begin to cherish feelings of hatred and their anger breaks out into words of contempt, into ferocious resolves, and they look fondly forward with brooding and ill-concealed delight to the coming of the day when there will be no inequalities, when there will be neither rich nor poor, when all as equals and brothers will sit down together at the same table.

And what of the rich? The rich find fault with the poor, reproach them, fear them, and at times lay a heavy hand upon them; they say that, if they are poor, they have only themselves to blame, that they are not to be compassionated, and that there is no satisfying them. It is the story of the whole human race, both past and present, which goes on repeating itself through the centuries in every form, and which to-day seems more acute and more threatening than ever.

How can these two camps drawn up the one over against the other, be brought together? How can these sons of the same Father, who now look upon each other as enemies, be reconciled and made brothers?

There is much talk of agrarian laws, of divisions of property, of socialism, collectivism, and communism; who can number the systems devised and

proposed even in our own age to solve the problem? All governments have tried to devise means the most efficacious for bettering the lot of the poor and suffering; they have enacted laws to provide for those unable to work and for those whom misfortunes have overtaken. Private charity has originated and organized societies without number with a view of assisting all those in manifest need, and in this great work no age has surpassed our own, and no age can rival our own in intelligent activity and lavish generosity. The Church approves, praises, blesses, and encourages whatever can be done, without violating justice and the rights of others, to aid in removing, or at least in ameliorating, the hardships of the poor. But can all these efforts, good in themselves and useful as they are, close and heal all the gaping and bloody wounds of the social body? It would be a strange delusion to think so. They may diminish the distress and lessen the number of the suffering, but they can never banish poverty, drive sorrow and pain out of the world, and make all men happy. There have always been rich and poor upon the earth, sometimes more and sometimes less of each, and there always will be. As men will ever be impotent to thrust death, which is inherent to their nature, out of the world, so will they be impotent wholly to banish poverty and the sad train of evils that accompany it.

Look at the human body; it has divers and diverse members, hands and feet, eyes, ears, and tongue, lungs and heart and so on, and each of these has its own office and each has proportionately a greater or less share of life. Look at the human soul; what a diversity of intelligence, will, and memory. No ten men can be found who are perfectly equal in bodily strength and in mental endowments and aptitudes. Now diversity of bodily strength and mental endowments imply a diversity of labor, and diversity of labor implies diversity of gain and compensation, and these again a diversity of conditions and treatment in all things, and hence while some have abundance others are in need; the former are the rich, the latter the poor. Add to all this the different use each man makes of his bodily energies and mental gifts, and the network of chance in human affairs, wholly independent of the will, and you will understand that it is not only necessary, but inevitable, that the condition of each man will be different; that the division of goods will be unequal and that there will be rich and well to do, poor and wretched, just as there are healthy and robust, sick and infirm, industrious and energetic, drones and laggards, men of quick and men of sluggish intellect. It is in this sense that Holy Writ says that God has created rich and poor, that is, He has so ordered things that in the

present social condition both must exist. Poverty, however, must not be regarded as an evil in itself; it is a condition necessarily arising out of the fact of men living together, just as infirmity of body and soul is a condition of the nature of each of us, and hence it is irrational to marvel at its existence and unjust to hate and execrate it.

So true is it that poverty is not in itself an evil that Jesus Christ took it as a companion and would not be separated from it during all the days of His sojourn on this earth.

He is God and the owner of all things; everything in heaven and on earth is His; all are obedient to His will, for who could resist it? He could have been born in the most magnificent royal palace of the world; He could have gathered about Him a splendid court such as the world has never seen; He could have brought to His feet all the kings and potentates of the earth and extended His scepter over all peoples. This is what we with our worldly ideas should have expected and what very likely we should have advised Him to do, but did He do it? Hold up your heads, ye poor who listen to me; behold Him as He comes for the first time into the world. Where do you see Him? In a royal palace? No. In a splendid mansion? No. In a poor cabin? No. In a refuge for the poor? Not even there. You see Him in an abandoned cave, in a shelter for animals. Where is He

laid? In a crib from which animals feed. Who gather about Him in all this squalor? Two poor creatures, His mother and St. Joseph. Could there be extremer poverty than this? Ye poor, speak out and answer me.

Now I ask: If poverty were an evil in itself, how could Jesus Christ, who is wisdom itself, have taken it for His own? He had before Him poverty and riches; He could have taken His choice, but of the two He chose poverty, not ordinary but extremest poverty, such that there is not, nor has there ever been, anything to equal it. Either Christ made a mistake in His choice, and to say so would be blasphemy, or poverty far from being an evil is a positive good, a good which, as compared with riches, is incomparably preferable. Now I challenge any man who believes in Christ and in His Gospel, I will not say to deny this truth, but even to call it in question.

All ye, whom Providence has placed among the great army of the poor, ye who daily feel the sufferings it involves and groan under its yoke, look upon the Babe of Bethlehem. He, the Lord of the universe, deigned to make Himself the lowliest of men and the poorest of the sons of Adam; compare your poverty with His and tell me if His is not greater than yours; and then reflect that He voluntarily took upon Him this poverty and made use of His omnipotence to secure it and to be able

to practise it; while men exert themselves in every possible way to escape poverty, Jesus Christ put His omnipotence at the service of poverty and took it as His best beloved spouse.

And then, my friends, what if this poverty be the result of your own conduct and transgressions and the just penalty due to your sins? How can you refuse to accept that poverty which is the fruit of your deeds and the expiation of your disorderly conduct? Jesus Christ, who possesses all things in heaven and on earth, who is by nature holy and should not feel the goads of what is in us the consequence of sin, nevertheless chose poverty as His own, took it to His bosom, and made it His inseparable spouse, and you thrust it from you and endeavor to escape it!

Poverty, my friends, is not an evil. It was the inseparable spouse of Jesus Christ from the cave of Bethlehem to the Cross on Golgotha, and as such the apostles embraced it, as have all the army of saints in every age and in every quarter of the globe. They voluntarily stripped themselves of everything that they might be like Him, who had not whereon to lay His head and who as a babe lay upon a handful of straw, and when they could not do this they wept and followed in spirit and with tender affection the great *poor man,* who, as St. Paul says: "Being rich became poor for

your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich.'"[1]

The poor who, like Jesus, accept and love poverty, are not exposed to the infinite perils that accompany riches; their heart is not in this world; they know not its solicitudes nor the goads of vanity, pride, and ambition; neither do they know the anxieties of avarice, nor the seductions of gluttony; they escape more readily from the snares of incontinence and from the temptations to sloth; and they are happily necessitated to observe the fundamental law of the Gospel, which prescribes the carrying of the Cross, the denial of self, and the mortification of the flesh. The poor, the imitators of Jesus Christ, are flowers and plants that have not sunk their roots deep into the soil of this earth and which the hands of God can easily transplant from this vale of sorrow and trial to the everlasting heights of heaven. Who can recount all the admirable advantages of poverty as Christ presents it to us in Himself, ennobling and dignifying it with divine honors? Never forget, ye of every class, who suffer and feel the pangs of poverty, that the Son of God in coming on this earth took up His position, not among the rich, but in the very front rank of the grand army of the poor, saying to them: "I am one of you; come, follow Me."

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

To-day, as throughout the whole course of His life, Jesus Christ comes to us poor, the very king of the poor, but how does He bear up under His poverty? Does He complain? Does He upbraid the rich to their faces? Does He reprove them for their hardness of heart? Does He kindle in the hearts of the poor feelings of anger, scorn, envy, and contempt against the rich? Does He parade His poverty and does He oppose to the ostentation and pride of the rich the ostentation and pride of the poor? No, He does nothing of the sort; He utters not a word of complaint because of the privations to which poverty subjects Him; He utters not a single reproof against the rich; by no act or word of His does He enrage the poor against the rich; He never makes of poverty a watchword against the rich, never opposes to the arrogances of the rich the disdain of the poor. His poverty, though extreme, is a tranquil, humble, modest, patient, and contented poverty, and in giving us a picture of it the evangelist does so with a conciseness and simplicity of language and with a gracious serenity that is matchless: "She, Mary, brought forth her first-born and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Ye poor, behold your model; behold the way to make your poverty worthy of the respect of your

fellow men and meritorious of reward in the sight of God.

When I was a young student I went with some companions, as was our custom in that city during the octave of the Nativity, to visit a very beautiful crib; the crowd of poor people there was so great that it was only with difficulty I was able to get near that representation which is ever old and ever new. Behind me was a good mother on her knees, holding a young son six or seven years of age to her breast. I overheard her saying to her son these words, which still ring in my ears: "Do you see," she said pointing to the Babe, "that infant there on the straw? That is Jesus our Saviour. See how poor He is, and how poor His Mother is; they are poorer than we are." And in saying this she kissed affectionately her boy, who had his eyes fixed on the Babe. My friends, who can tell how many poor, in thinking of the divine infant, born in a cave and lying on a handful of straw, have felt words of complaint and discontent dying away on their lips, have stifled in their hearts their rising anger against the callousness of the rich, and have found in that sublime example patient strength and serene peace of soul! The words and example of Jesus Christ, who was voluntarily poor, have done more to aid the poor, suffering, and distressed than all the writings and pompous discourses of those who

set themselves up and parade as their advocates!

But does the solution of the great problem, which Jesus Christ brings before us to-day in His own Person, consist simply in inculcating patience to the poor and resignation to the laws of nature established by God and in bidding them look forward to an everlasting recompense? No, what regards the poor is but one-half of the solution; the other half concerns the rich, to whom Jesus Christ (who, the richest of the rich, became voluntarily the poorest of the poor), has left, and had the fullest right to leave, Himself as a model.

Jesus Christ is yonder in the cave of Bethlehem at the dead of night, abandoned by all and destitute of everything. Being omnipotent He had need of no one, but, not wishing to call His omnipotence to His aid, and submitting Himself to the ordinary laws of nature, He willed to receive assistance from the hands of others, even from His own creatures. As He had received life from His mother and the first ministrations from His mother and St. Joseph, as might any ordinary babe, so would He have men supply such succor as was required by His needs. In the darkness of the night God by means of angels called to the crib of the Saviour of the world some shepherds, who were keeping their flocks on the near-by hills; and so also by an unwonted and luminous sign in

the heavens He led from the far-away East some wise men or princes to His feet. Why did He conduct both the shepherds and the wise men to the feet of His Son, made man, lying there on His bed of straw? Doubtlessly that they might know Him, adore Him, and furnish His first disciples the nucleus of the Church that He came on earth to establish; and since all classes are called to enter into it, poor and rich were called; and since the kingdom of heaven is especially the kingdom of the poor, the shepherds, that is, the poor, came before the rich or the Magi. The shepherds came first to Jesus Christ and then the Magi; they saw Him, recognized Him, and falling prostrate adored Him.

And think you, my friends, that the shepherds on looking upon that sight, although themselves poor, did not feel their hearts melt with pity and succor Him as best they could? The Gospel does not say so, but it is only natural to suppose it. And here allow me to say what I feel, what experience has taught me and what I have had ocular proof of. It should seem that it is a duty belonging properly to the rich and the well to do to succor the poor and that this duty is clear and manifest. And yet it is a fact that, all things considered, the poor are more open-handed and generous than either the rich or the well to do. I have never yet seen a poor person come to the door of

one of our country people, who after all are poor, and be sent away empty-handed; what he received might be very little, such as the poor can give, but it was at least something, and before God and men it had the value of the mite which the widow in the Gospel dropped into the treasury of the Temple; and on the other hand I have more than once seen a poor man driven from the doors of the rich. The poor, who suffer and know what it is to be poor, are more inclined to be compassionate and, even in their want, are more ready to succor the needy; hence we believe, and not without reason, that the shepherds of Bethlehem did not fail to provide as best they could for the divine babe, who was poorer even than they. But after the poor the rich came also to the feet of Jesus and the Gospel tells us that the Magi offered Him gold. Hence we see that scarcely had Jesus been born when both the poor and the rich were called to Him, the lowly children of the fields and of the plain people, and men of science and authority, for He was and is the Teacher and Saviour of all; but the honor of being first called belongs to the poor and not to the rich.

Jesus Christ, when presenting Himself to us on the very threshold of life, had the poor on His right hand, in the post of honor, and on His left the rich, the great of the world, and by His example, a language more eloquent than words, says to

the poor: "Do not complain of your state; look at Mine and learn to suffer with calmness and dignity; respect the rich; live by the labor of your hands, and envy not those who abound in all things; if others hold out to you a charitable hand take their gifts and be grateful, and never forget that the kingdom of Heaven is of the poor who suffer in peace."

And turning to the rich He says: "Ye rich, look at these poor, of whom I am the chief; they are your brothers and they are suffering; help them without humiliating them; help them by the noblest of alms, by finding them work; if they are unable to work, give to them of your abundance; this is your simple duty in the sight of God, your charity will come back to you a hundred-fold. Relieve their indigence by what you have over and above your needs and your charity will re-establish that holy equality which stepmother nature, or misfortune, or even culpable faults have deranged. Let humble and tranquil patience be the virtue of the poor; let delicate and generous charity be the virtue of the rich; these two virtues will make you brothers on earth and will unite you forever in heaven. I willed," said the poorest of the poor, "to be needy and I was not ashamed to receive aid from the hands of My creatures; I willed to be poor and I lived by the toil of My hands; ye poor, look upon Me. I am the owner of all things, all the wealth of

earth and heaven is Mine, and I give to all good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over. Ye rich, imitate Me."

This, my friends, is the solution which Jesus Christ gives to-day of the terrible problem of wealth and poverty which dismays the world; it is not new, it is as old as the Gospel. This solution, even in the eyes of men, is the best, the most practical that can possibly be conceived and which, if received and reduced to practice both by rich and poor, will soon solve, aye, this very day, the difficult problem without noise or violence, without the shedding of a drop of blood or a single tear. Do men of science reject it? Very well, then, let them find another that will be equal to the emergency. For us Catholics it is the only possible solution, and falling on our knees before the Babe of Bethlehem we accept it and we shall try each according to his opportunity and ability to make it a reality.

The Mystery of the Circumcision

DISCOURSE I

The Mystery of the Circumcision

For the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ: Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.—Epistle, *Titus ii.* 11-15.

St. Paul had many disciples who went with him on his numerous and lengthy journeys and loyally shared his great and painful trials, and their names are found recorded here and there in his Letters and in the Acts of the Apostles. Of these, two, Titus and Timothy, hold a distinguished place. To Timothy he wrote two Letters and to Titus one. These are included among the inspired writings, and though brief, contain a wonderful fund of pastoral wisdom, which rulers of souls should ever have before their minds.

On this day, on which the Church celebrates the octave of the Holy Nativity and sets before us for our consideration the mystery of the Circumcision, it will be well to explain the few verses, read in the Epistle of the Mass, taken from the second chapter of the Letter of St. Paul to Titus.[1] I say that it is well to explain these few verses, since in so doing I am in accord with the spirit of the Church, which in the selection of the Epistle and Gospel is always careful to choose those that delineate and set forth the mystery that is being celebrated; and moreover she wishes the pastor of souls to take from one of these the subject of his discourse. For this reason I have determined in this first Discourse, which is more properly a homily, to give you a commentary on to-day's Epistle, and I think you will agree with me that it embodies in a wonderful way the full spirit of to-day's mystery, the Circumcision.

The Apostle, after pointing out to his dear disciples, first, the qualities required in a shepherd to forestall the work of those who sow error, and, next, the truths and precepts to be impressed upon all, men and women, masters and servants, skilfully

[1]Titus was the son of a Gentile father, and after embracing the Faith followed St. Paul, and, as appears from many passages of the Letters of the latter, was very dear to him. When St. Paul went to Crete, about the year 55 or 56 of our era, he took with him Titus, and having founded a church there, set Titus to rule it. A little while after he left there he wrote the Letter, which we possess, and which is a brief and splendid compendium of the duties of a bishop and in general of every pastor of souls.

passes on to speak of the fundamental reason for all this, which he naturally finds to be grace and the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ. And here begin the beautiful words I wish to explain.

"For the grace of God, our Saviour, hath appeared to all men." Grace, as used in this phrase by St. Paul, does not mean, as is clear, this or that special gift, but the economy of the Christian law taken as a whole, the sum total of divine revelation, the entire work of Jesus Christ. Hence the word "*grace*" includes all the truths taught by Jesus Christ which we must believe; the means by which we are to sanctify ourselves, or the sacraments and the commandments, promulgated by Him; in a word, it includes the entire work for which He came upon earth. The sum total of our blessed religion is called a *grace,* because so great a benefit was not merited by us, nor was it due to us by any title whatsoever, and must be wholly ascribed to the measureless bounty of God.

This *grace* is said to have *appeared.* This word *appears,* especially if we take into account the Greek text,[1] in which St. Paul wrote, means something that manifests itself unexpectedly or which comes forth in an instant; and yet we know that God had made a long preparation for the coming of Christ and His mission, so much so that we can

[1]The Greek text says *Επεφάνη, manifested,* shone forth, as St. Jerome translated it.

truly say that the whole time that intervened from Adam to Christ was one continuous and progressive period of preparation for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. How, then, can St. Paul represent the coming and the teaching of Christ as if they were a sudden manifestation—*apparuit?* Because, while this manifestation was in preparation for centuries, the teaching of Christ, when finally it was announced, was something so exalted and so divine that it seemed almost wholly new: *Grace hath appeared.*

Look up into the heavens on a beautiful morning in summer; at first the dawn by degrees lights up the eastern sky, then there comes a faint streak of purple, next a warm rose color, and finally the sun rises so bright and dazzling that the eye can not look upon it. Although our eye is being prepared little by little for the sun's brilliant light, is it not true that between the effulgence that precedes the coming of the sun and the appearance of the sun itself, there is so marked a difference, that the transition is, as it were, sudden, and we instantly cry out in surprise: "There is the sun"? The same is true of what happened when, after centuries of preparation by patriarchs, by Moses and the prophets, Christ finally appeared; the transition was such that the Apostle cried out: *Grace hath appeared.*

From whom does this grace come? Whence

come that glowing light of truth and that potent force that invest created wills, pervade, and transform them? From *God our Saviour.* As God is the primal and only cause of all creatures, so is He the primal and only cause of all grace, whether of the natural or supernatural order. Grace, whether it illuminates the mind or influences the heart, whether it is internal or external, great or small, comes, as does the being of all things, from God. The angels and saints and the Mother of God herself may obtain grace by asking it of God, but it is not in their power to give it to us of themselves, as if they might do it at will and were the source whence it springs. And this is what St. Paul says: *The grace of God,*[1] *our Saviour, hath appeared.* The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; all the three Persons of the august Trinity are God, one sole God, as faith teaches. Now what Person is meant by the words, *of God?* Is the blessed Trinity meant, since the substance of the Three is one and common to all? If we take the words as a whole there can be no doubt that by the word "God" is here meant the Son, the Man-God. And in fact the words, *our Saviour,* that immediately follow can be understood only of the Son, of Jesus Christ, since He alone is personally our Saviour and Redeemer.

[1]The Greek word *God* is preceded by the article, and this can not be rendered in the Vulgate. We read as follows: *Επεφανη γὰρ ἡ χαρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος*

And here, my friends, allow me to make an important observation, which will teach you how necessary it is to accept with caution what certain modern men of learning assert, even though they be men of name in the world of science. There have been such men who did not hesitate to assert that nowhere in the Books of the New Testament is Jesus Christ expressly called *God,* and now you see, my friends, how far their assertion is from the truth. St. Paul in this passage calls Jesus Christ *God our Saviour,* and two verses farther on we shall hear him repeat the same expression more clearly and forcibly, calling Him *the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Were these learned gentlemen deceived or did they lie? We do not know; but one thing is very certain, namely, that to escape the taint of being *liars,* they must avow that they were deceived, and this is a shameful confession for men who boast of being learned.[1]

I call your attention, my friends, to the words *our Saviour,* so fittingly coupled with the word *God.* Scarcely has the word *God* left the pen of the Apostle, when with the rapidity of lightning he goes straight to the greatest work of this God,

[1]The modern rationalistic school, whose leader is Renan, following in the footsteps of the Arians of old, did not hesitate, and do not still hesitate, to assert that in no place of the New Testament is Jesus Christ expressly and in so many words called *God.* These passages are amply sufficient to show their bad faith, since we can not suppose that men of such reputed learning are ignorant.

saying, *God, our Saviour.* The idea of the Son of God could not in the mind of the Apostle, nor can it in the mind of any believer, be separated or disjoined from His work by excellence, namely, from the incarnation, the passion, and the salvation of men. True, He is first of all the Creator of all things, but this work is common to Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and is not the work that brings His greatness and goodness into the strongest light. The work of the Son of God made man, the work that is all His own and that brings out into fullest light His greatness and His goodness, is the saving of the human race, and hence St. Paul very properly, once He has named *God,* leaps over creation, and calls to mind the redemption, adding: *Our Saviour.* Where would have been the good of being created if we had not been redeemed? The first benefit, though great in itself, would have been to no purpose had it not been crowned by the second.

But thou, O great apostle, dost call God *our Saviour,* that is, the Saviour of us who believe in Him. But is Jesus Christ the Saviour only of believers? And are those who were before Him and who knew Him not, and those millions and millions who do not know Him now and those who never will know Him, excluded from the benefit of His redemption? Is not Jesus Christ, the Man-God, also the Saviour of these? "No, no," cries the Apostle,

"this is not my meaning. The phrase: *The grace of God, our Saviour, hath appeared,* goes on to add, *to all men.* Do not fancy," St. Paul seems to say, "do not fancy that the great grace of the Saviour is made known and given only to us children of Israel, to us who believe; it hath appeared and is offered to all men without distinction of country or clime, of tongue or time: *To all men.* All are called to share in this incomparable benefit, and no one is excepted."

You will say: Why, then, is it that up to the present moment, the bulk of mankind has not enjoyed this great benefit? Does the sun refuse its light and heat to a single creature? No, as far as it is concerned it communicates its light and heat always and equally to all; and how many receive from it either no benefit at all or very little? How many living beings are buried in the bowels of the earth, how many trees grow in valleys and ravines that are never gladdened by a ray of sunshine? How many blind, with dead pupils, seek it in vain? Whose is the fault? Certainly the fault lies not with the sun, which is lavish of its gifts, but rather with men and things themselves and with the special conditions that surround them. The same must be said of those men that come not to the knowledge of truth or to believe in Jesus Christ, who on His part always offers truth and faith to all and refuses them to none, and therefore is He the Saviour of

all men. If the weft of human affairs and the vicissitudes of earthly events so operate as to deprive many of the fruit of Christ's redemption, certainly the fault is not to be sought in Him, but in men themselves and in a mysterious interweaving of human conditions; not in the primal Cause, but in the secondary causes. How joyful we should be and how grateful when we reflect that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all and that on His part He denies to no one the knowledge of truth and the aid of grace: *The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men.*

What is the immediate end of this grace of the Saviour? To instruct or teach us: *Instructing us.* The whole energy of the soul is exerted through two faculties, that constitute its glory, namely, the intellect and the will. The intellect goes before the will, just as lightning goes before a clap of thunder, as a command goes before obedience. Would you have a man do your bidding? Get hold of the intellect and the will sooner or later follows, since of its very nature the will must follow the reason, as its guide. Hence we see that Jesus Christ, wishing to have men born anew and saved, began by subduing their intellects, giving this command to His apostles: *Teach all nations.*

Hence St. Paul says that Jesus Christ by His grace *teaches us,* that is, as the word *instructing*[1]

[1]The Greek word *παιδεύουσα* corresponds to the word *Erudiens* in the Vulgate, and properly means the teaching of children.

really implies, He *schools us,* or gives us the first rudiments of truth, as is done in the case of children.

And what are these rudimentary elements, which Jesus Christ holds out to us as He might to children? Listen: *That denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly or piously in this world.* All the practical teaching of the Gospel may be reduced to two heads, very simple in themselves and very concisely expressed in Holy Writ: *Decline from evil and do good.* It is the sentiment that is expressed in other words in the passage already quoted; in the first half we are bidden to deny ungodliness or impiety and worldly desires, or to decline from evil; and in the second half we are bidden to live soberly and justly and piously, or to do good.

Let us dwell a little on these words of the Apostle. St. Paul bids us deny impiety and ungodliness. Impiety is the contrary of piety and it refers primarily to God; hence he is said to be impious who offends God directly by blaspheming, by profaning sacred things, by denying the truths imposed upon us by God, and so on. The first effect, then, of the grace of Jesus Christ in the faithful, according to St. Paul, is to withdraw them from any sin whatsoever that may directly offend God. Then going on to those that indirectly offend Him he bids us deny ourselves in worldly

desires. In this phrase the Apostle includes all the sins to which human passion allures us, such as a licentious desire for enjoyment, a lawless love of riches, of eating and drinking, or carnal pleasures, and of honors, all of which he would have us make war on ceaselessly and resolutely, as on the very source and origin of all sin.

My friends, we can say in all truth that the half of the teaching of the Gospel may be reduced to the practice of this one sentence of the Apostle: *Denying worldly desires.* How have we up to the present moment observed this rule? Can we say that our life has been one ceaseless struggle against these worldly desires? Alas, how often have we bargained with them! How often have we welcomed them into our hearts and made them our queen?

But the teaching of Christ does not stop short at bidding His followers not to follow the wicked suggestions of sense and worldly desires; it requires that they shall give themselves to the exercise of all virtues, and all this St. Paul expresses in these words: "We must *live soberly.*" This temperance or *sobriety* or just measure refers to ourselves and to all our acts, both internal and external, and these must be constantly regulated in such way that they may never transgress either by defect or excess, but be always conformable to reason and faith. The observance of a just measure in desires,

in longings, in love of creatures, in word and deed, in eating and drinking, and in all things, is what is meant by living temperately or with *sobriety.* Whoso curbs worldly desires will live conformably to this law, laid upon us both by nature and by faith.

The Apostle adds another adverb, which has a well-defined meaning. He says: "We should live *justly.*" Justice means the giving to every one what belongs to him, and undoubtedly the Apostle by this word wished to impress upon Titus and all the faithful that they were not in any way to violate the rights of others, whether in their person, good name, or property.

St. Paul brings his exhortation to an end by lifting our thoughts to Him who has all rights over all, adding: *We should live godly and piously.* He first bids us to deny ungodliness or impiety, and then he enjoins us *to live godly or piously.* Piety is a tendency of the soul toward the things of religion and of God and it carries us on to the faithful discharge of the duties whose object is religion and God Himself. Thus the Apostle in these three words, *soberly, justly,* and *godly,* has abridged all the duties of the life of a Christian, whether toward ourselves, toward our neighbor, or toward our God, and has left us in a compendious form the sum of Christian perfection.

By observing these simple and perfect rules of

Christian conduct in this present life—in this world—what recompense shall we have in the life to come? The Apostle tells us at once: *Looking for the blessed hope,* that is, we shall have the certain hope of future bliss. Bear in mind St. Paul promises those who live soberly, justly, and piously a reward, and a great one, but not in this life, only in the life to come: *Awaiting the blessed hope.*

And when will this blessed hope be realized? When shall we receive the reward of having denied ungodliness and the desires of this world and of having lived soberly, justly, and piously? At the coming of the glory of the great God, Our Saviour Jesus Christ.[1] The workman is paid his wages at the close of the day, and at the close of the day of this life we shall all receive our recompense according to our works, and this recompense will be confirmed in the presence of the entire world at the end of time; and it is to this second and last coming of Jesus Christ that the Apostle clearly alludes in this passage. Those who receive Jesus Christ in faith and love at His first coming, so lowly and inconspicuous, will be received by Him in great glory at His second coming, which will close His work with His own final triumph and with that of His followers. You will perceive that the entire teaching of Christ is reduced substantially to what

[1]This is a Hebrew form of speech which may be rendered thus: "When the glorious coming of Jesus Christ will take place," etc.

the catechism teaches with great simplicity, namely, that God has placed us upon this earth that we may know Him, love Him, and serve Him in time and be happy with Him in heaven for all eternity. The essence of religion is that the present life is a preparation for the life to come; that on earth is sowed the seed of that felicity that will flower and come to maturity in eternity; that the recompense of our labor in time will be received in eternity; in a word, that the present life is subordinate to the life of the future; that the latter is dependent on the former and that the eternal destiny of man is in his own hands.

I call your attention, my friends, to these words: *"The glory of the great God and Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* Who is the God whom St. Paul calls by this new term, *great?* He is Jesus Christ, as is clear from the context, since it is neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son of God made man, who is to come at the end of time in the splendor of His majesty to judge all men, and this *great God* is our Saviour Himself, Jesus Christ.[1] It is, then, true beyond all question that St. Paul in this passage calls Jesus Christ *God,* aye, the *great God.* They, then, should be silent who in our day have dared to affirm that in no passage of the New Testament is the Son of the

[1]The particle *και* (and) joins the words "Great God" with the following, "Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," in such way that the whole phrase must be said to constitute one single subject.

Virgin Mary designated in so many words by the name of God.

St. Paul uttered the name of Jesus Christ, Our Saviour; the words were as a flash of light in his mind; they called up to his memory the whole life of Jesus Christ, His mission, and, more than all, His measureless charity, which impelled Him to endure for our sakes the shameful death of the Cross, and all this inspired the Apostle to write these words, vibrating with love and gratitude: "*Who* (Jesus Christ the great God) *gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works.*" How did Jesus Christ give Himself for us? Do not the Sacred Writings say that God gave His only Son for the saving of the world? Do they not say that Judas and Pilate surrendered Him into the hands of His enemies? Yes, this is all true, but this does not alter the fact that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us because His sacrifice was voluntary: "*He was offered because it was His own will.*" His Father gave Him because Jesus Christ offered Himself; and Judas and Pilate gave Him into the hands of His enemies because He permitted it and willed it. And why did Jesus Christ will it? To redeem us from iniquity and to form to Himself a people acceptable and pleasing to God. This is the immediate end of redemption, because it is the means to obtain the

supreme end, the glory of God, by the triumph of justice and charity.

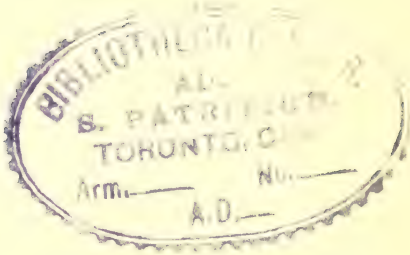
Still you should not fancy that Jesus Christ in redeeming us by the sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, thus freeing us from sin and making us clean and acceptable to God, does thereby exempt us from any effort on our part. Had He done so He would have encouraged sloth, extinguished human liberty, and destroyed the root of all merit. He offers us the price of our redemption, but He does not constrain us to accept it; He leaves us free to accept or reject it; He opens for us the way to go to Him, and with His aid we can pursue this way. It is for this reason St. Paul adds: "*That He might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works.*" Do you understand, my friends? It is not enough that Jesus Christ has died for us, that He has paid the price of our redemption; it is not enough for us to believe what He teaches; to be pleasing to Him we must also do good works: *A pursuer of good works.* Let us never forget that faith without good works is dead; that these are the life, the flesh, and blood of faith; that they justify before God and to them is promised the crown of justice.

The phrase, "*a pursuer of good works,*" used here by St. Paul, should be noted, since it means not only one who does good works, but one who puts his heart into them, who does them zealously,

earnestly, promptly, striving as in a noble rivalry to surpass others.

The Epistle ends with these words: *These things speak and exhort.* This is a command given by St. Paul to Titus and which I, in his name, repeat to you, and which the Church will go on constantly repeating until the end of time.

The Epistle that we have explained consists of only four short verses, but what a wealth of truth they contain, truths that apply wonderfully to persons of every state and condition. Let us think them over and over again, fix them deeply in our memories, make them the rule of our conduct, and in them we shall find life.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DISCOURSE II

Circumcision—Baptism—Name of Jesus

And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised: His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.—Gospel, *Luke ii.* 21.

This one brief verse contains the Gospel which to-day the Church sets before us for our meditation. The Gospel is indeed brief but full of deepest meaning. The art with which the Church keeps ever alive in the minds of her children the memory of the leading mysteries of Faith, mysteries which are all to be met with, which are all made manifest, in the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, and which at various intervals we find commemorated throughout the course of the liturgical year, is indeed marvelous and replete with divine wisdom. Eight days ago the Church, full of joy and gladness, bade us come to the cave of Bethlehem, there to gaze upon the divine babe and with the shepherds to acknowledge and adore Him; to-day she again bids us come to Bethlehem and to that same cave, for during these eight days no one has offered a suitable place for the painful rite of circumcision, to which He is pleased to subject Himself. And within the next six days we shall again

see Him receiving the homage of the Magi, the first Gentile believers. It is as if the Church had set up columns here and there along the way traversed by her children, on each of which is written a page from the life of her Spouse, the Saviour of the world. Passing to and fro they stop, lift up their eyes to the page, read it, call to mind their divine Master, go back in memory over His life and His example and with renewed strength set out again resolutely and joyfully on the way that leads from Egypt, the land of bondage, across the burning sands of the desert, to the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.

This is the second column we meet with in the course of the ecclesiastical year. What do we read there, my friends? Only two words, *circumcision* and the name *Jesus,* words packed with valuable lessons. Let us halt awhile here and try religiously to grasp the meaning of these words.

"After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."

In these words of the Gospel two points are adverted to, the circumcision and the name of Jesus, which the Child received on that occasion; let us fix our thoughts on these points.[1]

[1]In this passage St. Luke does not distinctly say that Jesus was circumcised, but only that "the eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised." Still the way in

What was the *circumcision* which the Mosaic Law imposed upon only the children of the male sex? It was a painful cutting made upon the body of a child, or of an adult who wished to be numbered among the sons of Abraham and to embrace the Mosaic Law.

When was it instituted? It was instituted when God made a solemn promise to Abraham that in him all nations should be blessed and that from his seed should come the Saviour of the world.

Still later Moses determined the time when it should take place, namely, the eighth day after birth, and prescribed the details of the rite and the terrible punishment to be inflicted on those who did not perform it. The rite of circumcision was in use not only among the Hebrews, but also among the people of the East, and it is observed also in our own day among some of the savage tribes of Africa, as we are informed by travelers whose testimony is worthy of belief.

What was the purpose of the rite and its meaning? God called Abraham; He made magnificent promises to him, as we learn from Holy Writ, the substance of which was that he was to be the

which the Evangelist writes, together with the constant, universal, and unanimous tradition, sealed as it is by the feast we this day celebrate, makes it absolutely certain that Jesus Christ was circumcised.

The rite of circumcision might be performed by any one and it might be performed in any place, and hence we may hold that Jesus received this rite in the very place in which He was born and that St. Joseph performed it, as some Fathers think.

father of a great people, of whom the Messias, the Man-God, the Redeemer of the human race, should be born. Abraham was faithful to the call; he was proof against every trial, and between God and him a sacred covenant was entered into, and, as is clear from many passages of the apostles, the symbol of this covenant was circumcision.

Moreover, a religious society is like an army or any other well-ordered body. Is there any body, or society, or army, any kingdom, or empire, or republic that has not some sign or standard, around which its members gather and rally? Assuredly not. So also the Mosaic religion must have some visible sign, which should distinguish it from other religions and which should be, like a standard, a sign of union and fellowship. This sign was given by God, was first received by Abraham, and was ratified as a fundamental law by Moses. As among us Christians one who is not baptized is regarded as an infidel, so also among the Hebrews one not circumcised was regarded as outside the Synagogue and a Gentile. Hence it is not surprising that the Fathers, following the teaching of St. Paul, should have regarded circumcision as a figure and a symbol of Christian Baptism, and as a matter of fact the points of similarity between the two sacred rites are many and striking.

Circumcision was instituted by God, the Author of the Old Covenant, Baptism was instituted by

the Man-God, Jesus Christ, the Author of the New Covenant; circumcision imprinted an indelible sign upon the body, Baptism imprints an indelible sign upon the soul; circumcision, like Baptism, could be received only once; circumcision could be given by priest or layman, Baptism may be validly administered by any one, even an unbeliever; circumcision had not in itself the virtue of conferring grace—it was only a sign of and an incentive to the faith that justifies, Baptism is at once a sign and an instrument, or an infallible means of grace; by circumcision he who received it, infant or adult, became the son of Abraham and a member of the Synagogue; by Baptism either infant or adult becomes a member of the Church and an adopted son of God. Hence has circumcision been ever considered, and rightly, a figure of our Baptism.

But you will say, why did Jesus Christ, who was holiness itself and came to do away with circumcision, submit Himself to it? For the same reasons which led Him later on to observe all the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law and which are so accurately set forth by the Fathers. By receiving circumcision Jesus Christ acknowledged its divine origin and the divine origin of all the Mosaic economy; He gives us an example, and a most efficacious one, of obedience to law, even when it imposes, as in the instance of circumcision, the gravest sacrifices; it was an implied confession of

sin, to which all the children of Adam were and are subject; and Jesus Christ, who came to take upon Himself the punishment of sin and to endure it in His own person, wishing also to be like unto sinners: *in the likeness of sinful flesh*—wished also to receive circumcision.

Nay, more, Jesus Christ came to teach men, and to teach first of all the Hebrews, His brothers according to the flesh, as He Himself says more than once in the Gospel. It was therefore necessary that He should divest Himself of everything that would in any way make His words less acceptable to the Hebrews; now, had He not been circumcised they would have scouted Him as an unbeliever, would have refused to listen to His words, and would have held Him in abomination. There was another and a most noble motive for His wishing to be circumcised. The circumcision of the body is a figure of the circumcision of the heart, which is the very root of the teaching of the Gospel, but of this subject I shall have an occasion to speak in another place.

I have said that the Mosaic circumcision, to which Jesus Christ to-day voluntarily submitted, thus giving us a sublime example of humility, self-denial, and love of suffering, is a figure of our Baptism and I have given you the reasons for saying so. You will, then, not take it amiss if I set before you certain necessary truths in regard

to Baptism, and put you on your guard against certain abuses and prejudices, which are unfortunately gaining a foothold in our Christian society.

It was an inviolable law among the Hebrews that every male child should be circumcised, and the very day for this was fixed, namely, the eighth day after birth. Not a single child of Israel violated this law. Now, not Moses, but Jesus Christ has ordained in the most solemn way that every man without distinction of sex, age, or condition must be baptized; not Moses, but Jesus Christ has clearly affirmed that he who will not be baptized is outside His Church and already judged and condemned.[1] His words are: "Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."[2] And again: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not (and is not baptized) shall be condemned."[3] From this absolute law, sanctioned by Jesus Christ, no one can exempt himself—neither adults, who know the law and must observe it, nor infants,

[1]It is, of course, hardly necessary to say that the eternal condemnation pronounced against any one not receiving Baptism applies only to those who know of its obligation and necessity, as is clear from the words of Our Lord: "Preach to every creature; he who believes and is baptized," etc. Hence there is here question of adults who must first be instructed and believe, and, as a consequence of believing, receive Baptism.

[2]John iii. 5.

[3]Mark xvi. 16.

for whom their parents must make provision and for whom their parents are responsible before God until the children become their own masters.

Now what do we see, my friends? I say it with profoundest grief, we see parents, few indeed, but example is infectious, who refuse to take their children to the sacred fount and have them baptized. What an outrage to the faith we profess, to the Church whose children we are. Could it ever be believed that out of the bosom of a society, which Jesus Christ has made wholly Christian, we should see arise another society unchristian and pagan? That from it should come forth those fear-inspiring signs of defection and apostasy of which the Apostle speaks? That many of them should neglect confession and holy communion, Christian marriage, and the other sacraments is indeed, O my divine Saviour, an evil, a misfortune, a sin over which we shed bitter tears, but that they should refuse to receive Baptism, that they should scorn the character of a disciple of Thine, that they should close against themselves the portals of the Church—this is too much. It is a crime which, when committed in a society already wholly Thine, is without name; it is a formal repudiation of Thy Gospel, it is to thrust us back again into the horrors of Paganism, it is to say to Thee: "We will have none of Thee; we will blot out Thy name forever." And are such parents not shocked, does

not their blood run cold when they reflect that their children do not belong to Christ, that they bear not His mark upon their souls, that they are strangers in the bosom of the Christian family? To what religion do they belong? What God do they acknowledge if they will have nothing to do with the God of the Christians, if they cast out Jesus Christ? What faith can inspire them, what hope sustain them here below? My God, never could I have believed that out of the bosom of this society which takes its name from Jesus Christ, which owes to Him its intellectual, moral, and material greatness, should rise up men who would publicly disclaim and disown Him. Let us pray for them, and pray also that such a scandal may fill us with horror.

Jesus Christ enacted and promulgated the law of Baptism and made it obligatory under pain of eternal loss; the Church, the depository and the interpreter of this supreme law, has fixed the time for its administration, and following in the footsteps of the Mosaic Law directs that infants shall be borne to the sacred fount on the eighth day after birth.[1] The law is an easy one, its motive is the spiritual good of the child, and it is wholly in keeping with our duty toward God. But is this law, which is so righteous, so easily kept, and whose

[1]The time is not specified, except that it is recommended to have infants baptized as soon as possible.

aim is the spiritual good of the souls of children, dutifully observed? My friends, bear with me while I speak out what my soul feels keenly. In our cities and in some of our larger towns there are, unfortunately, parents, and many of them, who either refuse to have their children baptized or put off their Baptism for weeks and months, and even years. And why is this? You, my friends, can not be ignorant that Baptism is so necessary that without it no one can enter heaven; you can not be ignorant that a most weighty law of the Church obliges you to procure for your offspring this great blessing within eight days after their birth; why, then, do you delay so long to discharge this duty? Why do you disregard a law of the Church of such importance and one so easily observed? The life of those infants is very frail and uncertain; a slight puff can put it out; and how grieved you would be, what a remorse of conscience would torment you to the end of your days, and what an account you would have to give to God, if through your neglect your babe should die without Baptism. You would be inconsolable. As soon, then, as you possibly can, even before the eighth day, bring your babe to the Church in order that through Baptism it may become a child of God and acquire a right to eternal life.

You will say that Baptism may be put off for good reasons; the mother wishes to take part in

the family festivities, or a godfather can not be had; and there are often other reasons which make it necessary to defer the solemn rite.

Say what you will, the law is there and ought to be observed; and if there are special reasons that render a dispensation necessary it should be asked of the proper authority, which alone has a right to extend it, and this, being a benign authority, will graciously grant it; but no one should take upon himself to judge in a matter of such moment. And why in such cases is provision not made for the safety of the child by giving it private Baptism and defer to a more convenient time the celebration of the solemnities of the rite? The civil law fixes the time for entering the name of the babe in the public register, and none of you ever think of not observing it, and you do well. But why is not the same respect shown for the law of the Church? Is her law of less importance than the civil law? Or are the eternal interests of the soul to be made secondary to the temporal interests of the body? I leave you to judge.

As this seems a proper place, you will allow me to examine and to reply to a difficulty which presents itself and which, being seemingly well taken, deserves an answer.

It is urged that it would be more reasonable to put off conferring Baptism until such time as the recipient shall know what he is doing and is fully

conscious of the duties he takes upon himself. It does not seem reasonable or conformable to the respect due to man's freedom to impose upon him a religion of which he has no knowledge, and grave duties, both of which, as days go by and he comes to know them, he may disavow and reject. And this is precisely what is done when Baptism is conferred on an infant. Wait until the child grows up, until he gains a knowledge of religion and of the duties it imposes, and then he can, if he wills, freely embrace the religion and assume its duties. And this is what was done in the Church in times gone by, and this is what is still done in regard to the other sacraments, which are received after one comes to the age of reason. No one should be made a Christian without knowing it, by surprise as it were, and forcibly, as in the case of a babe who receives Baptism.

The answer is short, clear, and concise.

Fathers, who listen to me, I ask you: Would you think it reasonable to wait until your children are ten or twelve years of age before reminding them of the duties they owe you? Would you think it reasonable and just to wait until the intelligence of your children is fully developed and until they are capable of fully exercising their liberty before asking them if they are willing to acknowledge you as their fathers, willing to consent to become your children and to discharge their duties toward you?

Nay more, where is the State or Government that waits until children have come to the use of reason and have become their own masters before declaring them its subjects and requiring them to observe its laws? By the very fact that they are born within its territory the State regards them as its subjects and treats them as such; nor does it think it necessary to ask them if they will consent to become its subjects and accept its laws. Are not your children registered as citizens of the country within a few days after their birth and before they can possibly know what duties this act imposes? And would you have God, the supreme Father of all, wait until your children give their consent before calling them His own in Baptism? And would you have the Church wait until these children, born in her bosom, should come to her and say: We are content to become your children by Baptism?

Is not God's right over you, fathers and mothers, and over your children, greater than your own? Did He not exist before both you and your children? And who can take from Him His right over them, a palmary, absolute, and imprescriptible right? Those children do not know the duties that rest upon them, and not knowing them they can not discharge them; but you parents know them, and since your children and you are one until they reach the use of reason and become

their own masters, the duty of having them baptized devolves upon you, and you must see to it that they are baptized, in the same way that you yourselves would be obliged, if not baptized, to receive the sacrament. You are responsible for them up to the very day when, they having acquired the use of reason, your responsibility ceases and theirs begins. And so true is it that they form but one with you and that you are responsible for them until they arrive at the age of reason and become their own masters, that the Church does not permit them to be baptized without your consent, just as she severely forbids any one to be baptized against his will.

True, children are baptized without any knowledge of the fact, but so also without knowing it do they contract original sin; they receive both the wound and the medicine that heals it without a knowledge of either.

Baptism is the greatest of gifts, for what gift can be greater than to receive the grace of God, to be made His children by adoption and heirs to eternal bliss? And should your children be deprived even for a time of this gift? Should it be delayed until they are able to say that they wish to receive it? If they should fall heir to a great fortune or to a great dignity, would you also wait before receiving it until they should be able to express their willingness? If your children should

fall sick, would you wait until they expressed a desire to have a physician, before calling one in, or take their medicine, before administering it? Why, then, do you not follow the same rule when there is a question of the health of the soul? Where is the man who would refuse a great favor? His consent is always and necessarily taken for granted. My dear parents, the will of your children, who are still infants, is your will, and you are surely not ignorant of your obligations to God.

We are well aware that in the early ages of the Church Baptism was put off until children were of a mature age, but there were reasons and very weighty ones for so doing. On the one hand it was thought unwise to expose mere children to the fury of persecution, and, on the other, time was needed to prepare them for such terrible trials. Once the danger of persecution had passed, the Church reprobated the practice of Christian parents, who put off having their children baptized, and will we to-day again introduce that abuse? Let us, then, no longer witness in our cities and larger towns children unbaptized for months and it may be years, and in consequence deprived of the grace of God, under the dominion of sin, and in danger of dying outside the Church. This digression has been somewhat lengthy but still not unprofitable, and now let us go back to our subject.

Among the Hebrews when a child was circumcised a name was given to him; similarly, among us, when a child is baptized, he receives also a name. By circumcision the child became a member of the Mosaic society; by Baptism he becomes a member of the Christian society. It is, then, but proper that in the very act by which he becomes a member of the new society he should also receive a name by which he may be known and registered among his fellows.

The Gospel tells us that the name of Jesus was given to the Son of Mary and of God: *His name was called Jesus*—Jesus, an adorable, a glorious name, which will one day be pronounced in every tongue and resound throughout the remotest corners of the earth.

What is a name? It is a word that points out and designates a person, which men agree in applying to him, and which at times expresses and mirrors forth with more or less fidelity his physical and moral qualities. The name of a person, to be really such, should be as a frame that encloses a painting, a corolla that enshrines a flower; it should be a compendious expression for all the qualities with which he who bears it is adorned. This is rarely true among us, but in the case of our divine Saviour it was perfectly true. Nor could it be otherwise, for His name came not from man, but from God Himself and

expressed with marvelous precision His personal character, His dignity, and His mission. Jesus in our tongue means Saviour, Saviour without any sort of restriction of time, or place, or people, Saviour *universal* and *perennial.* True, before His coming this august name was given to others, but it only partially fitted them, and sometimes it fitted them not at all, and again it seemed given in bitter irony, for those who imposed it were men. Here the name *Jesus* or *Saviour* was given by God and it expresses absolutely the meaning it implies, Saviour of man, of all men, Saviour both of body and soul, the one only Saviour, who in the work He comes to do has no need of others; it is wholly His and so also is the glory thereof.

Rightly does Holy Writ say that there is no other name whereby we can be saved and that at the sound of this name every knee shall bend whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell. It would seem, then, impossible that so great a name could be profaned or blasphemed by any one who has knowledge of it, who believes in Him who bears it, and who has received from Him the blessings of salvation. But alas, how often do we hear on the streets, in the public squares, at home, in private and in public, this blessed name horribly outraged and blasphemed! This is to outrage and blaspheme the name of Him who not only has never done us, and never can do us, the least harm,

but who has loaded us with benefits, who is our Saviour and only hope. Let no blasphemy, my friends, not even an irreverent word against this holy name, ever fall from your lips. To it in heaven, on earth, and in hell, be praise and honor and glory forever.

I said above that as the Hebrews at circumcision, so do we Christians at Baptism, give a name to our children. And I will make a useful remark and in doing so I shall speak my mind out freely.

Holy Church recommends and almost commands that sacred names, the names of some of the innumerable heroes and heroines who are her pride and her glory, shall be given to children at Baptism. The name of a saint will bring to mind during life the model to be copied and an advocate and protector to be invoked. The name borne by a Christian is a continual reminder of his faith; it is an incentive to virtue, a word in which the deeds of an apostle, a martyr, or a saint are epitomized, which inspires him to imitate the life of his patron and reproves him when by his conduct he dishonors him. Christianity has triumphed over Paganism. The greatness and glory of Christianity in every respect far transcend the greatness and the glory of Paganism. Why, then, should we dig up from their ashes names distinctively Pagan, names of famous men and mythological heroes, distinguished for deeds of shame and

great crimes, and give them to our children? Is not this a shameful and an inexplicable contradiction? The idea of us Christians going as mendicants for the names of our children to the heathen, or to novelists, who it may be, are worse than the heathen. Do not the names Peter and Paul, John and Thomas, Louis and Francis, Agnes and Agatha, Cecilia and Catherine, and countless other heroes and heroines of the Catholic Church supply us with splendid ideals of strength and spotless virtue, of science and moral grandeur? This love of Pagan, or partially Pagan names, of names found in novels, which is getting to be common among us, is evidence of a still more culpable love, a love of Pagan ideas and Pagan deeds, which is infecting our Christian society. We are Christians, and the names of our children and of our grandchildren ought to be in themselves a profession of our faith and a reminder of the virtues which should enrich and beautify our lives.[1]

[1]One indication of a return to Paganism in a considerable part of our society is a fondness for Pagan names. It is painful to see on the sides of our locomotives such names as Pallas, Mercury, Saturn, Minerva, Ceres, Astrea, and others, all names of pagan dieties; and it is still more painful to hear boys and girls called Cybela, Adonis, Miltiades, Themistocles, and Vetturia. Are not Christian names quite beautiful enough?

DISCOURSE III

The Circumcision of the Heart

MY FRIENDS, the old year is behind us; it came to an end only a few hours ago; the new year is before us; to-day it opens upon us. The year that has closed brought with it its measure of joys and sorrows, of good and evil, and its heritage will continue with us into the year that is dawning. And what does this year that opens to-day hold in store for us? Will it alleviate our evils, will it make them less endurable? Should human science be questioned, what would be its answer? What would the vaunted progress of our age reply? Let those men of science and learning, who dominate land and sea, whose gaze penetrates into the depths of the heavens, who weigh the stars and trace out their courses, let them rise and tell us what of good and evil the coming year will bear us.

Alas, men of science and progress, proud as they are of their present triumphs, bow their heads in silence or murmur a few inarticulate words; they confess that the book of the future is closed to their eyes and that God alone can read it.

Cast a glance backward over the path of the

year that has irrevocably vanished into the abyss of the past, and what do you see there? You see it strewn with corpses; they mark every day, every step of the journey which we have completed. It is quite certain that the same will be true of the new year, since the cruel and invincible hand of death never wearies of its work. During the coming year who will fall beneath its scythe? Whom will it spare? None of us knows; this is God's secret.

Yesterday and to-day friends, by word of mouth, by letter and by telegram wished or will wish you length of years and happiness, for there is an effort being made to substitute for the beautiful custom of wishing a joyous Christmas that of wishing a happy New Year. Men may indeed send you the kindest of messages, wishing you health and happiness and length of days, but can they make their messages good and their wishes a reality? No; God alone is the source and fount of all good; He alone can make good the sterile wishes of men and convert their desires into happy realities. And how, my friends? To-day's mystery, if we meditate on it as we should and get at its meaning, will teach us a wonderful lesson.

To-day the Son of the Virgin, the Babe of Bethlehem, in the mystic rite of circumcision sheds the first drops of His blood, the first-fruits of the supreme sacrifice of Calvary. To-day He begins

in deed the heavenly teaching He will later on confirm by word, a teaching ever old and ever new, written by Jesus in letters of blood. The world seeks happiness and hopes to attain it by fleeing from suffering; Jesus Christ promises true and perfect happiness, but only by pain and suffering. This is what He teaches us to-day by His circumcision. Who is right, Christ or the world? Listen and judge for yourselves.

All men, without a single exception, always, at all times, at every instant, and in every act, impelled by reason and instinct seek but one thing—their well-being and their happiness. This is the yearning of rich and poor, of learned and ignorant, of princes and people, of the young, who, filled with hope throw themselves into the full tide of life, and of the old, who, worn and disillusioned, stand with bent frame looking into the grave soon to welcome them. Where is the man who seeks not, craves not, happiness? Even the suicide seeks and yearns for it; he takes his life, persuaded that he is flying from present ills and vainly hoping that his new state of existence may be less unendurable, and this for him is a relative happiness. Happiness is the craving of the heart, the yearning of the soul, the burden of life. Every being has its own burden inseparable from it; the longing for happiness is the burden of our very existence and draws us onward toward those

objects which we fancy can give it to us. Every son of Adam incessantly prays earth and heaven for happiness, just as the hungry beg for bread and the thirsty cry out for water.

Now all those who thus eagerly thirst for happiness may be divided into two great classes, the children of faith, of the Church, and of God, and the children of the world and of the age.

In what do these latter place their happiness? What do they regard as the surest and speediest way of attaining it? Some seek it in honors, in the applause of men, in the pleasure of ruling; others in gratifying the baser passions of sense and in carnal delights; others again in eating and drinking, in pomp and display, in heaping together riches, in splendid dwellings, in showy equipages, in retinues of servants; and, finally, many think those happy who are released from all care and lead a life of idleness. In a word, all these think that the secret of being happy consists in banishing all pain and in fully gratifying every passion. The passions must be gratified; this is the teaching of Epicurus, which his followers took from the Book of Wisdom, there ascribed to the wicked: "Let us eat and drink, let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered, for tomorrow we die."

Now, my friends, let us come to ourselves. Is this the path to happiness? Putting faith aside,

let us interrogate reason; what does reason tell us? It tells us that the gratification of the passions can not bring us happiness either in this world or the next.

Let us get at the truth; let us grant that happiness consists in satisfying the passions, so that every one can say: "I have sated them to the full; I desire nothing more." Is such a condition possible on this earth? To make it possible all would have to be rich, all loaded down with honors, all healthy and robust, wanting nothing, living in a terrestrial paradise, among men all ever intent on making others happy, and, if need be, forgetful of themselves and of their own happiness. Now, I ask, is this possible? It is and will ever be a dream. There will always be rich and poor; the former having the cares and trials that riches entail, the latter suffering the privations and sorrows inseparable from poverty. There will always be men higher up, and these are necessarily the few; and men lower down, and these are necessarily the many; the former are ever fearful of being cast down and are jealous of rivals; the latter are restless at being indistinguishable from the crowd. There will always be the healthy and the unhealthy; the victims of their own errors and of the malice of others; the martyrs of their own selfishness or of the self-seeking of their neighbors. If, then, happiness consisted in the

gratifying of the passions it would be absolutely unattainable here below, because it would be impossible to satisfy the passions.

But granted even that men, all men, could always and fully satisfy every passion, would they then be happy? Would they then have obtained their supremest wish, so that they could say: "I am content, I am perfectly happy"? No. Ask the few who for a time at least had everything they could desire, and even what it seemed folly to hope for. Solomon and Alexander, Cæsar and Augustus and Charles the Great were among the few who were so fortunate here below; they were men of great talent and possessed of great wealth, they saw all the world prostrate at their feet and they enjoyed the glory of being great conquerors; humanly speaking, they had not a wish that they could not gratify. These at least should have been happy. Were they so? The words of Solomon are well known: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity and affliction of spirit." And not less known is the lament of Alexander, who died in the flower of manhood, that there were not more worlds to conquer.

And in fact how can any one hope to find the perfect happiness for which he so yearns in the gratification of his passions, which represent only one half, and that the less noble, of his nature?

Man is not alone body; he is also and chiefly

spirit, and as spirit he has needs that all the goods of earth can never satisfy. He needs truth, and he needs to see it clearly and to possess it securely, at least in as far as his nature permits; he needs what is good, and such good as will fill the void, finite indeed, but still boundless, of his heart. In this conquest of truth and good when will man say, "Thus far and no farther"? From the depths of his mind and heart the cry is unintermittently going forth: "Still more. Yet more. Onward. Still onward. Ever onward." But how far? Evidently only infinite truth and infinite good can satisfy his longings and make him truly happy. Lay at his feet mountains of gold and silver; let all the world bow down in reverence to him and offer him its homage; let his sense of taste be gratified by food the most delicate and draughts the most choice; let all his appetites of every kind be completely satisfied; and yet the soul in the midst of all this wealth, applause, and creature comforts will say that they are but empty nothingness, and will be tortured by a yearning, a need, dominant, indistinct, and implacable, that will leave it no peace and will fill it with distress, till it cries out in anguish: "I am not happy! I feel here within me that I am immortal, that these goods will last only for a time and will soon pass away, and that I must part from them and for good and all; I am a spirit and

all these pleasures are but material pleasures; I crave something that is greater than I, and all these goods are less than I; and, alas, how far inferior! It is manifest that my passions, even when gratified to the full, both in time and measure, can never make me happy with the happiness for which I have an inextinguishable thirst. Nay, more. I see that these passions, even though I could sate their imperious demands, would become my most ferocious tormentors and, far from securing me my longed-for felicity, would prepare for me nameless sorrows and extinguish the life itself, which I so love. Pride, ambition, haughtiness, would kindle against me the hatred of men and rob me of all peace; avarice, the heaping together of money, would measurelessly increase my cares, anxieties, and fears, and make me an object of envy and hatred to the multitude; a gluttonous and sated appetite would make me a burden to myself and shorten my life; lustful living would render me despicable and loathsome to my friends and even to those who despise virtue, would wear out my forces, intellectual, moral, and physical, and hasten me on to an untimely death. By gratifying the passions then, not only can I not, in spite of what the world says, become happy, but I shall be the author of my own unhappiness, the murderer of my own body and soul in time, as reason clearly demonstrates, and in

eternity, as faith teaches. If, then, I desire my own happiness, and I can not but desire it, both in this world and the next, I must turn my back on the world and seek another teacher, who will point out to me the way to secure it. And to whom shall I address myself, O divine Teacher, but to Thee, who on this day dost write over Thy body by the rite of circumcision in characters of blood an abridgment of Thy whole moral teaching''! Let us meditate on this teaching.

St. Paul, the faithful and eloquent interpreter of the teaching of Jesus Christ, often speaks of circumcision. He distinguishes a two-fold circumcision, one of the flesh, which Holy Mother Church calls to our minds to-day, and another of the spirit, or, what is the same thing, of the heart, of which the circumcision of the flesh is a figure. St. Paul tells us that the circumcision of the *flesh* without the circumcision of the *spirit* or the *heart* is of no avail. This circumcision of the heart is what God requires; it is this that makes us true disciples of Christ and leads us on to happiness, and it is this that St. Paul goes on ceaselessly inculcating in a hundred passages.

What does circumcision of the spirit or heart, of which circumcision of the body is a figure or symbol, imply?

By the circumcision of the flesh is meant an incision by which a small part of the flesh was re-

moved and which was exceedingly painful. By the circumcision of the spirit or heart is meant a wound inflicted on self-love, a cutting away of the passions, a making war upon our ill-regulated desires, all of which is painful to the spirit, and is therefore fitly called the circumcision of the spirit or heart. As the Hebrew became a son of Abraham and a member of the synagogue by the circumcision of the body, so does the believer become a son of the Church and a living member of Christ when he circumcises the spirit or heart by cutting away every culpable affection. And this is the substance of Christian morality, the sap of the Gospel: "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." And St. Paul reiterates the same truth in other words: "If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." And again: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." And again: "Put off the old man, that is the man corrupted by passion, and put on the new." These strong and energetic expressions, which come frequently from the pen of the Apostle, reinforce and confirm the great doctrine of the circumcision of the spirit. And since this Gospel doctrine is fundamental and in its nature painful to observe, it will be useful to go somewhat at length into the subject.

If any one will examine himself diligently, study

his own heart, search the inner foldings of his spirit, he will find there, if I may so express myself, two men, or to use St. Paul's phrase, two laws, each opposed to the other; the old man, or the man of passion, and the new man, or the man of virtue; the law of the senses, which lures him on to unlawful pleasures and to sin, and the law of the spirit, which inclines him to love what is good and to practise virtue. Our *I*, one and most simple, is as it were set between two opposing men, between two laws, each warring against the other. On the one hand, our *I* feels the influence of pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, envy, wrath, sloth, in a word, of the whole host of passions, which by every lure and device, now pleasantly and by solicitation, now fiercely and violently, drag it down along the path of pleasure that leads to sin; and on the other, our *I* feels the attraction and knows the beauty of humility, justice, temperance, chastity, charity, and duty; it sees the entire legion of the virtues calling it, beckoning it to come on, and all the while the grace of God is interiorly and in mysterious ways inclining it to them. What is this *I* to do, this *I* which is so diversely influenced and so perpetually drawn hither and thither by forces wholly opposite and antagonistic? You will understand at once that he should take the side of virtue, listen to the voice of God, in whom alone can be found every good and every perfect happi-

ness. But this he can not do without repulsing the solicitations of the passions, without cutting the cords with which they make every effort to bind him to themselves and drag him after them and make him their slave, without pulling out the roots that are sunk so deep into his mind and still deeper into his heart and have so fast a hold upon it.

All this goes to show the necessity of suffering and of the circumcision of the spirit, as taught by Christ, without which there is no salvation. Without this circumcision it is impossible to please God and to attain the felicity that is born of virtue. The most difficult part of the Gospel is precisely this circumcision of the body and of the spirit. Why has the Gospel its enemies? Why is it not welcomed by all? Precisely because the great law of mortification, or circumcision, which lies at the very base of it, frightens a world that is intent on gratifying the senses and the flesh. And yet what is more rational than the circumcision taught by Christ? The world itself recognizes it in its own way and observes it in spite of itself.

Ye fathers and mothers and teachers, and men constituted in authority, what rule do you hold with your children, your pupils, and those subject to you, if they fail in their duty and violate the law? You punish them and the punishment is in the measure of their offense. Among you the transgression carries with it its punishment; it

follows the offense as the shadow follows the body. Who taught you that a transgression deserves a punishment, and that for every pleasure unlawfully indulged a pain should be inflicted? Where did you learn that punishment is the reparation of a fault and sorrow the expiation of a transgression? The natural light of reason taught you this; you learned it from your conscience and from the latent natural sense. And hence all peoples of the earth, ancient and modern, have decreed that all crimes, or what are thought to be crimes, shall be punished. The law of circumcision, my friends, as promulgated by Christ, is founded on the same principle. It is primarily a penalty imposed for sins committed, a reparation due to the violation of law, a punishment due to the passions that have gone beyond the bounds prescribed to them. The passions protest and rebel against this chastisement, just as the guilty protest and rebel against law; but reason finds it just and necessary, and looks upon it as in a way a restoring of the order that has been disturbed.

But even if the passions had not violated established order, the law of circumcision would still be necessary to keep them within the bounds of justice and to force them to put their energies at the service of virtue.

"Whence," says St. James, "*are wars and contentions?*" Whence, in a word, are all the sins that

flood the earth and make the condition of man so trying? "*Are they not,*" answers the same apostle, "*from your concupiscences or passions?*" And where is the home of these wicked concupiscences and passions? In your members, answers again the same apostle, within yourselves, in your spirit, in your body: "*Which war in your members.*"

Crush out these passions, then; scourge them, starve them that they may not hurry you along on the way that leads to sin and sorrow. What is this but the circumcision of the spirit, of which the circumcision of the flesh, that Jesus Christ received in His body, is a figure?

Take note of the vine-dresser, who with his knife mercilessly cuts away the greater part of the shoots and tendrils of which the vine is so prolific. One by one the twigs fall under his cruel hand, and out of the fresh wounds flows drop by drop, like tears wept in pain, the sap of the vine. Why, my good man, hast thou so cruelly wounded the vine? Has it not supplied thee grapes in abundance? And is it thus thou showest thy gratitude? And not yet content, later on he will come again, when the vine has put forth fresh shoots, and lop off still others of these vigorous twigs. He is not impelled by caprice or ill-will in using the knife so freely on the vine and stripping it again of its young shoots,

but by a desire to prolong its life and to make it more prolific. Had the vine-dresser not pruned the vine and cut away its luxuriant growth, its strength would have been soon exhausted, and it could not have supplied food to the growing grapes it bore; it would have produced no fruit at the vintage and it would have dried up like a mother unable to nurture her children. The vine-dresser was merciful and wise and only the senseless will find fault with him. We should do the same in regard to ourselves, since, as Christ has said, we are vines and branches: "*I am the vine, you the branches.*" We should prune and lop off the unhealthy, luxuriant growth of the passions, cut away what is excessive, that the sap thus wasted may nourish virtue, and that as St. Paul says, "it may bear fruit not unto uncleanness and iniquity but unto justice and sanctification."

And, my brethren, if you will but consider the vegetable and animal kingdoms you will see that the great law of mortification is always and wisely applied in both, as the most efficient and economical means of healing the weakness and infirmity of nature and of developing and restoring its forces. The botanist strips off some of the leaves from flowers and plants to make these more vigorous; the sick voluntarily deny themselves many things that they would love to eat and drink, and cheer-

fully submit to be burned and cut in order to regain health and soundness; the healthy man to keep healthy foregoes many pleasures; the soldier to make his body rugged and robust undergoes many fatigues and hardships; and the student deprives himself of sleep and keeps long vigils in order to gain knowledge; in short, nothing good or great can be accomplished in any pursuit whatever without toil and sacrifice, without the spirit of self-denial, or, in other words, without the circumcision to which Jesus Christ submitted on this day and which constitutes the very marrow of His teaching.

If we wish to be His true disciples there is no middle way; we must cheerfully take upon us the law of circumcision, or at least be resigned to it. The life of Jesus Christ opens with His birth in the cave of Bethlehem and with His circumcision there eight days later, and it closes on Calvary; it opens in blood and closes in blood. Any one who dreads the circumcision of body and spirit, or who will not accept the sovereign law of the mortification of the passions, both interior and exterior, at least in as far as his condition in life and his strength permit, should not deceive himself by fancying that he is of those who are of Jesus Christ, since Christ proclaimed to the world that "he who would come after Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him."

The Mystery of the Epiphany

DISCOURSE I

In the Mystery of the Epiphany are Foresbadowed the Three Periods of the Church's History

JESUS CHRIST is truth itself: "*I am the truth.*" Now as regards truth, whether we will or not, there are only three attitudes possible: either we spurn it, make war on it, try to stifle it and murder it, whether with the sword or with sophisms, it matters not; or we fall at its feet, worship it, declare ourselves its faithful followers, and, if need be, its soldiers; or, finally, we care nothing about it, we pass it by, not deigning either to salute it or to insult it. In other words, as regards truth there can be only three classes of persons, either those friendly to it, those hostile to it, or those indifferent to it, and I challenge any one to find a fourth class; it is absolutely impossible. In our age these classes stand forth in the full light of day.

The divine babe, the everlasting Truth, is yonder in Bethlehem. Herod and his advisers, satellites, and courtiers hate Him and send assassins to murder Him in His cradle; these are the enemies. The Magi, coming from far-away countries,[1] fall

[1]In the Sacred Books the word "Orient" is used generically to signify Chaldea, Mesopotamia, Persia, Arabia, Petraea, and other countries to the east of Judea, more or less known to the Judeans.

down at His feet, worship Him and offer Him kingly gifts; these are the friends. The Scribes and Pharisees, the leaders of the people, the chief priests, on being asked by Herod where the Messias is to be born, reply: "At Bethlehem, for so said the prophet." And to Bethlehem the Magi, strangers, who know nothing of Sacred Scripture, straightway set out, while the teachers of Israel, the guardians of the traditions and of the Sacred Books, do not move a foot, do not accompany them; they care absolutely nothing about the Messias, they act as if His coming did not concern them at all; these are the indifferent. In these three classes of men, whose attitudes on the coming into the world of the divine babe were so different, we have in epitome a forecast of the whole history of the Church, for her life and works are but a continuation of the life and works of Jesus Christ.

Generations as they come and go divide into three great camps in their attitude to the Church of Christ; first there are enemies, frequently having as allies both law and power, who wish to exterminate her; next, there are friends, who are loyal to her, who honor, obey, and aid her; finally there are the indifferent, who never give her a thought. Now all these classes of men, each in its own way, put the divine life of the Church to the test. Her enemies attempt to murder her with the sword and she comes triumphant out of the ordeal;

her friends unconsciously attempt to allure and seduce her with gold, and again she is victorious; the indifferent, the heartless, and the cynical aim at destroying her, and once more she comes unscathed from the trial.

Let us fix our attention on these three points, a subject vast enough indeed, but we shall barely touch on the first two, these being familiar and referring almost exclusively to the past, and dwell at some length on the last, because it represents the character of the period upon which modern society is entering at full sail.[1] The subject is worthy your attention.

When Herod heard from the Magi that a king had been born to the Jews and when this news had been confirmed by the priests and the place of the king's birth had been pointed out, *he was troubled* and so were his courtiers, *and all Jerusalem with him.* Herod was not only troubled, he was frightened; and when kings, who have their hand upon their sword, are frightened, their fright is a cruel and terrible counsellor. "What!" said this ferocious tyrant to himself,[2] "what! another king of the

[1] The Jesuit Father Felix at the Congress of Malines in 1863, if I remember rightly, delivered a very eloquent discourse, entitled "The Three Phases of the Church," or that of material persecution, legal protection, and separation from the State. From him I have borrowed this idea and its development.

[2] Who was this Herod? Scarcely had he mounted the throne when he asked Anthony (the Triumvir who ruled in the Orient) to sanction the execution of Antigonus, his rival, and Antigonus was beheaded. He put to death all the members of the Sanhedrim,

Jews? And am not I alone the king of the Jews? And will not my sons reign after me? And there is a new king foretold by the prophets? And priests and people await His coming? And the very place where He is, is known? And miraculous signs in the heavens announce Him? And they come into my very presence seeking Him? And they come from afar to do Him homage? And this they say to my very teeth, as if I were not king of the Jews? And if those from afar are stirring, what may be expected of those at home? May not this babe, that is said to be born at Bethlehem, be a pretext for uprisings and rebellion, so fickle are the populace and so superstitious? There is no time to lose; the spark must be stamped out before it breaks forth into a flame; the axe must be laid to the root of the evil. A child more or less doesn't matter. The safety of the throne, public tranquillity, reasons of state, all demand immediate action. Away then with soldiers to Bethlehem, kill, slaughter all babes of two years and under

who during the siege of Jerusalem, had taken part against him and his Roman allies; Aristobulus, his brother-in-law, the son of Alexandra, was drowned by his orders in a bath at Jericho; he gave over to the executioner, under a false pretence of treason, old Hyrcanus, the last of the Asmonaeans; he unjustly suspected Mariamne, one of his wives, and she had to die. The intrigues of Pheroras and Salome aroused his suspicion in regard to his two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and he ordered them to be strangled. As he grew old he became more cruel and stern. The Pharisees, exasperated by his irreligious and anti-national policy, plotted a revolution; he seized the two chiefs, Judas and Mathathias, and had them burned alive. (Josephus the Hebrew, as cited by Didon, vol. 1, pp. 60 and 61.) And history calls him *The Great!*

in and about the city." And the barbarous command was instantly executed.

But the divine babe escaped the slaughter. How? By a miracle of God's omnipotence? Did God send a legion of angels to guard the asylum of His Son? Did He send lightnings from heaven to strike and consume with fire Herod and His enemies? Did He make use of one of those tremendous means of which the story of the Old Covenant is so full? No, my friends; the life of Jesus Christ had been frequently sought previously to the day fixed for His death, and by various means He baffled all the efforts of His enemies without once having recourse to the marvelous manifestations of His omnipotence; He preferred to have recourse to flight. He made His guardian aware of the danger that threatened Him, and by Him was transported elsewhere, thus putting a stretch of territory between Himself and Herod. The persecutor was made impotent and Jesus was safe. We should very likely prefer that the divine babe should have stricken His enemies from the crib with one of those flashes of infinite power so easy to Him and thus have shown forth to the world at once who He was, but this He did not will to do; it was not worth while. In His wisdom He makes use of what is least to accomplish what is greatest.

This is the history of the Church during the

first ten centuries; it is the history which at various intervals of time and in divers places has continued down to our own day, and will continue to be her history until time is no more, because the life of the Church is but a continuation of the life of Christ.

She was born in the cenacle, she wept in her cradle, she lay upon a bed of straw, poor, as her founder was poor and defenseless; and those who nailed Him to the Cross, whose hands were still warm with His blood, the high priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees, the multitude stirred to fury by fanaticism, the son of Herod, worthy of his father, the successors to Pilate, with the law behind them, threw themselves upon her and attempted to take her life. The blood of Stephen and James and of thousands of others purpled the length and breadth of Judea. Who was to defend this little flock of Christ? Who was to save this lamb of the divine Shepherd who had fallen into the fangs of those ferocious wolves? She had only the arms given her by her divine Founder; she must flee, suffer, pray, hold firmly to the Faith, confess it courageously, and die for it. And all this she did.

The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians; a tree when pruned sends forth ten, twenty vigorous shoots. While the apostles were still living the Church had set up her tents everywhere. If

Herod forced the divine babe to go into exile and to carry the light of truth into Egypt, the land of the uncircumcised, his son and the Synagogue together forced the apostles to announce the Gospel to the Gentiles, to extend the boundaries of the Church into the East and into the West, and in a few years we see her established at Alexandria and Corinth, at Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Rome, in Spain and in nearly all of the then known world.

Next, against the infant Church, so weak and destitute, and rich only in faith and courage, the giant empire of imperial Rome rose up. It had its legions ready at hand, legions that had gone up and down the world victorious and triumphant; it had with it all the glories of the past, the prestige of antiquity, science, art and letters, the wisdom and the power of the law; it had everything in its favor. The world had never seen and may never see again so much power and so much glory united together in one empire, and all concentrated in the hands of one man, the arbiter of its vast resources. This man, this emperor who was the incarnation of earthly power, whose iron grasp reached from the Euphrates to the Tagus, from the Meuse to the Nile, made war on the Church continually for three centuries with fire and sword, with science and every agency in his power; he inflicted wounds upon her, mangled her,

rent her asunder, assailed her with a ferocity never equaled before or since. And yet she never once took up arms to defend herself; her strength was always and wholly in suffering and dying. And which of these two came victorious from the conflict? The Church defenseless, the Church that day by day mounted the gallows, was the victor, and the armed giant was subdued, the victim conquered, and the executioner was vanquished.

Again, the great struggle which was commenced in Judea, which spread throughout the length and breadth of the vast Roman Empire, and which it was thought was over forever when the cross shone luminous on the crown of Constantine, broke out afresh here and there, and at times with more ferocity than of old. It broke out when Mohammed, coming up from the South, poured his countless hordes like torrents of burning and consuming lava upon the Christian world; it broke out when the untamed barbarians came down from the North, incursion following incursion like the waves of the sea, and overran all the countries that the Church had but just conquered; it broke out still later in the Middle Ages, when emperors and kings, whom the Church had nurtured and cradled upon her bosom, turned their arms against their mother; it broke out in the sixteenth century, when princes and peoples rose in revolt, devastated all northern Europe, and inflicted on the Church

gaping wounds so deep that three and a half centuries have not sufficed to heal them; it broke out at the end of the eighteenth century when that tempestuous storm broke upon the eldest daughter of the Church, enveloping her from end to end, devastating her rich fields and leaving ruin in its wake.

And even in our own day do not the winds that blow from the East and South often bear to our frightened ear the shrieks and agonizing groans of our brothers who are being massacred by barbarous Pagans in China and Korea, in Tonkin and upon the shores of the great lakes of Central Africa? The blood of the children of the Church of Christ is poured out in every age and from her crown is never absent the rose of martyrdom, and could all this blood be gathered together a whole fleet might float upon its bosom. There is no land no matter how inhospitable, no corner no matter how remote, that has not in some age drunk of the blood of her children, the voluntary victims of faith and charity. And in this terrific and ceaseless struggle between the Church, so weak and defenseless, and her enemies, so powerful, numerous, and cruel, which is the victor? Go over in memory the years that are gone and you will see all along the way traversed by the Church the tombs and the skeletons of her enemies, while she stands erect, cov-

ered with wounds, it may be, but full of life, youth and vigor. As Jesus escaped from the talons of Herod and his counselors, so has the Church come safe out of the hands of the thousands and thousands of enemies and hangmen whom hell has sent against her. Hence, she was triumphant in her first trial, a trial against material force, a trial against blood and steel, in which according to all the forecasts of human wisdom she should have gone down in inexorable disaster; the one who should have been victorious was conquered, and the one who should have been conquered was victorious; according to all laws of human reason their positions were reversed; the result, then, is to be ascribed, not to man, but to God, and to refuse to see this is to do violence to human reason.

Yes, I know, says the man who boasts of being a scientific man, I agree, the Church, weak and unarmed, overcame the strong and the armed; the Church's victory is the natural result of conditions; it could not be otherwise. And why? And he answers: Because persecution creates a reaction, and reaction defeats the persecutor and gives the victory to the persecuted. Wonderful reasoning this. If you would have a tree grow up strong and vigorous strip off the leaves, lop off the branches, make incisions into it, do everything possible to harm it. If you would have a lad grow up healthy and robust starve him, give him no sleep

nor rest, beat him, horsewhip him, thump him, abuse him. If you would have a society to prosper and grow great, persecute it, tyrannize over it, crush it. The Church expanded and grew precisely because she was savagely persecuted! Had she during those first ages been, as she was later, conspicuously honored and protected, loaded with favors and riches, what would you have then said? You would have said that she owed her triumph to wordly power and favor and to the protection of the great. But instead of enjoying the favor of the world, its power and its wealth, she was, on the contrary, the object of its most violent hatred and of its most implacable persecution; and because she was so, these scientific men, inverting the order of sane reason, tell us: It is precisely to these persecutions that the Church is naturally indebted for her final triumph.[1] Let us leave these gentlemen and go on to the second period of the Church.

Herod desired the death of the divine infant, and his assassins rushed through the streets of Bethlehem and the near-by villages, barbarously

[1]I do not deny that at times persecution produces an effect the contrary of that intended, just as wind, instead of putting out a fire, causes it to burn more fiercely. But when? When the persecution is feeble, restricted in duration and extent, and in other respects such that it is powerless to subdue the strength of the persecuted; but such was not the persecution of which the Church was made the object. If the strength of the Church on one hand and of the State on the other be taken into account, every reasonable man must conclude that the Church ought to have perished and that if she did not her preservation was due to supernatural interference.

slaughtering all babes of two years and under, assured that in this horrible massacre the dreaded king of the Jews could not escape. The Magi, whether wise men or princes, came from the East to Bethlehem; they acknowledged and adored the divine babe, and offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Herod represents the enemies, the implacable enemies of the Church; the Magi represent the devoted children, her defenders, who load her with honors and enrich her. The latter are not less a peril to her than the former. The Church came forth from the Catacombs covered with blood; she was victorious over Paganism and over the barbarians; she saw princes and peoples devoutly and reverently bow down before her. Grateful for favors received, hoping to receive still greater ones, full of faith, princes and peoples emulated one another in offering her gold and incense, wealth and honors, immunities and privileges without number, ample possessions, absolute jurisdiction, rich tenures, the highest offices in the courts of kings and emperors, and all this wealth, all these privileges and offices permanently entrusted to the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, profoundly changed the condition of the Church. Abbots of monasteries and bishops seemed changed into princes and kings; the head of the Church, the Supreme Pontiff, adding a crown to the miter, and a sword to the shepherd's

staff, became the arbiter of kings and the consecrator of emperors; and in the course of a few centuries the weakness of the apostles was transformed into stupendous power and their poverty into incredible wealth. Was it all a benefit? It was unquestionably a benefit for princes and peoples, for it was the voluntary tribute of faith and piety to Christ and to His Church. Where is the true believer who would not, if he could, give Christ all possible honor and his richest treasure? Christ lives and works and governs in the Supreme Pontiff and in His Church, and it is but natural that the faithful should feel a desire to render all possible homage to the Supreme Pontiff and to the Church, to give power and wealth to both, and to place both next after God and above all human authority. Such is the prompting of Faith. But if honor and power and wealth are a danger and a snare to all men, as both reason and the Gospel teach, they are much more so to churchmen. It would require a miracle on the part of God to save them from their seductions. To this danger and snare was the Church subjected for a long course of years.

My friends, history is pitiless and God forbid that I should change a single line of it. We are disciples of Him who said: "*I am the truth,*" and we should speak it out fully and without reticence, for the truth and the truth alone can make us free

and be our salvation. They who from fear and from a false human prudence conceal the truth outrage the Gospel. In Holy Writ the Spirit of God has throughout long centuries revealed to all without a word of excuse or apology the crimes of David, the ignorance and infirmity of the apostles, the betrayal of Judas, and the fall and perjury of Peter, and when called on to speak out should we dissimulate, or should we conceal the scandals that have taken place in time past and still take place in the Church?

We say, then, that if the sword of the Herods and of persecutors caused her to weep bitter tears and drenched her with blood, the honors and wealth heaped upon her by her children often caused her to go into mourning and defiled her with dirt and filth. To prove this I should have only to reproduce some of the dreary pages of St. Peter Damian, of St. Bernard, and of other saints, or to repeat the agonizing cry of Hildebrand, that wonderful man sent of God to lift up the Church. "I look to the East," he says, "I look to the West, I look to the North, I look to the South, and I do not find a single bishop who governs the Church from love of God." What scandals in monasteries, among the clergy, among bishops! Rich and powerful, they forsook the pulpit and the altar to hunt with princes and to accompany them to battle. Wholly given to temporal affairs,

they lost sight of spiritual affairs; living at courts in the midst of ease and luxury, they seemed to forget that they had the care of a Church, and allowed it to languish in poverty, forsaken by its shepherd. The tide of corruption, the daughter of ease and ignorance, of wealth and luxurious living, rose higher and higher until at times its turbid and swirling waves seemed to encompass even the chair of Peter, from which alone safety could be sought. What portentous times were those for the Church of Christ! It was a miracle that she was not swept away in that mighty flood and that she did not disappear from the face of the earth. Any one familiar with the history of the Church from the sixth to the sixteenth century, and especially with the history of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, will agree with me that I do not exaggerate.

Nor is this all. The prince of darkness dared to say to Christ Himself: "I will give Thee all the kingdoms of the earth, if bowing down Thou wilt adore me." Kings and emperors of this world, even Christian and Catholic kings and emperors, not unfrequently made bold to say to bishops, the successors to the apostles, and even to Popes, the successors to Peter: "If you will do our bidding, if you will sell us your liberty, we shall pay you handsomely; we shall be your defenders on condition that you will consent to be our servants; we

shall ask of you only the sacrifice of some words of the Creed, or a part of the Decalogue—we shall not be over-exacting. If you do as we wish we shall double your honors, double your wealth and power, but if you refuse we shall take from you even that which you possess. And this is precisely what most kings and emperors have done down to our own day. It is enough to cite as examples Henry the Fourth, Henry the Fifth and Henry the Sixth, Frederic the First and Frederic the Second, Philip the Beautiful, Philip Augustus and Henry the Eighth, not to mention others. It was a period of interested protection, and frequently of real dominion on the part of worldly princes, and of disgraceful slavery on the part of the Church. Alas, what griefs and agonies, what damage and humiliation, this protection by princes of this world cost the Church! What a fearful price the Church must nearly always pay for it. Kings and emperors, while professing themselves dutiful sons of the Church and bowing before her as before a mother, were all the while binding her hands with fetters of gold. While kissing the feet of the vicar of Christ they were trying to persuade him to be an accomplice in their crimes and errors, and were not ashamed on occasion to whisper menaces into his ear. To resist and repel a strong man, who attacks you openly with arms in his hand, is difficult, but it is vastly more difficult to resist and

repel the prayers and the humble entreaties of one who calls himself your friend and son, and who is all the while betraying you. When I consider the two trials to which the Church has been subjected, the trial of the sword and the trial of gold, the trial of persecution and blood, and the trial of blandishments and protection, and put the one class over against the other, I am forced to say: Both are terrible, but the latter is more terrible than the former, because more insidious. The proof of this in history is as clear as the mid-day sun. And yet the Church came victorious also from this trial; she rent asunder the fetters of gold with which they strove to bind her, she flung from her the royal and imperial purple with which her doubtful and treacherous protectors, ready at an instant to change into oppressors, sought to clothe her. St. Anselm says that nothing is dearer to God than the liberty of His Church, and this she loves and prizes above everything else; it is her life and her strength and she has preserved it in spite of her troublesome protectors, at times leaving in their hands her torn mantle, as the chaste Hebrew youth left his in the hands of the shameless wife of Putiphar rather than yield to her importunities.

This second period of perilous protection is passing away now almost everywhere, to give place to a third, upon which some States have al-

ready entered and others will soon follow. The Magi who went to Bethlehem to adore Jesus Christ and to offer Him gold and frankincense would find very few imitators now among Christian kings and governments. These prefer to follow the example of the members of the Sanhedrim convoked by Herod. They knew where Christ was, they pointed out the place to the Magi, but they did not move a step to go to Him, nor did they by a single act acknowledge Him as their Saviour.

Governments to-day are writing upon their standards this legend, "Separation of State and Church," the meaning of which very few comprehend. By this formula society proclaims its utter religious indifference and says substantially, "I, a society, as a society, I, a State, as a State, have no religion, nor do I wish to have one, nor ought I to have one, and hence I should not range myself on the side of any church whatsoever or against any. It is a matter that does not concern me. I do not condemn religion, neither do I approve of it, nor make war on it, nor defend it; I do not even pass judgment upon it, nor can I do so. I am the State and as the State I ignore all religions, and therefore I pass laws regulating public instruction, the army, the magistracy, charitable institutions, the administration, and the relations between every class of citizens—just as if there were

no such thing as a religion. Religion is an affair of conscience, wholly interior, of which every one must be his own judge. Whether men are Catholics, or Mussulmans, or Israelites, or Buddhists, or Protestants, or Brahmins, or atheists, is no affair of mine, nor do I concern myself about it. I respect them all; I want liberty for all, to me all are equal, all are citizens, nothing more nor less. I grant to all the same rights, the same equality that of old Tertullian and St. Justin demanded." This is what I understand by separation of Church and State.

First of all, allow me to ask a question of those who say that all religions should be free and perfectly equal before the law and all on the same footing: Is all this honestly carried out in practice? There was once a Crucifix in the schoolroom and an image of the Mother of God, and many parents wanted them there; were they removed out of deference to this plenary religious liberty for all? School used to be opened with prayer; this has been forbidden. Catechism was taught, but you have banished it from the schoolroom. The name of God used to be pronounced with reverence, now in many schools it is forbidden to invoke this blessed name. Is this religious liberty and the equality of all religions? Formerly we had processions and public prayers were said along the streets and highways; these are now in many

places prohibited. It is a sacred right of the Church to select her own ministers; why, then, do you men, who disclaim any desire of mixing in the affairs of religion, make inquiries to ascertain if they are good preachers and capable of discharging the duties of the ministry, and require that they, before entering upon their office, shall have your approval? Is this what you mean by separation of Church and State? Why do you exclude the ministers of religion from nearly every civil office, if in your eyes they are not ministers of worship, but simply citizens and nothing more? It is impossible to reconcile this manner of acting with your boasted freedom for all religions and with your theory of separation of Church and State. We are familiar with the arguments with which it is sought to bolster up this theory.

One day I was conversing with a statesman, a man of upright mind, thoroughly honest, of high character, gifted with a fine and an acute intellect, an advocate by conviction of this theory, and in belief a Catholic. "We," he said, with an accent of sincere conviction, "wish the separation of Church and State." "You would have a State, then," I replied, "without any religion, or, what comes to the same thing, you would have a State, or laws without God, or atheistic." "Yes," he said, "a godless State, godless laws, that is our

ideal." "In that case," I replied, "you must have and must desire also an atheistic country." "No," he interposed, "I have not tears enough to deplore the misfortune of having our people become atheists." "Very well then," I added, "but how can you give atheistic laws to a people who are not atheists? or put an atheistic government at the head of a country that is not atheistic?" "I would have," he said, "the government atheistic and the laws atheistic in order that the liberty and the religion of each might be respected." "But," I replied, "how would you have a government and laws that recognize no religion, and that by consequence disavow all religions, respect all religions and cause all to be respected?" "In this way," he replied; "those who govern may each, as private citizens, profess what religion they think best; but as officials of the government, as public men, they should have no religion at all." "Tell me," I said, "do you think atheism absurd?" "Most absurd," he answered. "Well," said I, "would you govern a State on principles that are *most absurd?* Atheism is of all errors the worst; can it, then, be made the basis of order, of justice, and of sane politics?" He looked at me in silence. I went on: "Is a person morally bound to be subject to God, to obey Him, and to practise the religion which he believes comes from God?" "Who can doubt this?" was his answer. "And why," I

added, "is not a collective person, a society, or a government, no matter what its form, bound to do the same?" He replied: "The individual is so bound, but a society or government is not, for if it were it would have to impose religion upon those unwilling to accept it, and this would lead straight to the Inquisition." I interrupted: "No, it would not lead to the Inquisition, because a government, which itself professes a religion, may not forcibly impose it upon another." He retorted: "If a State or government, as such, recognizes and professes a religion, it must impose it on all, and put all who do not profess and observe it outside the pale of the law." I replied: "By no means; let it recognize it and profess it, aye, protect it prudently and according to its ability to do so, but it must not constrain a single citizen to act as a hypocrite." He replied: "The religious rights of citizens are not within the competency of the State; it should not interfere with them, and if it does, it goes beyond its province." I added: "If these rights were always confined to the sanctuary of the mind, will and conscience, what you say would be true; but they naturally manifest themselves in the external acts of the hierarchy, in the public professions of the faithful, in religious worship and government and in a thousand other ways. Now if you men representing the government are in duty bound to respect my rights of

ownership, my rights as a father, as a son, and as a citizen, why are you not equally bound to respect my religious rights, to protect me in their exercise, since to me these are dearer than my civil rights? Why will you guarantee my civil rights and not my religious?" "Because," he replied, "civil rights appertain to us; religious rights appertain to another authority, and let it provide for you." I interrupted: "But you also are subject to this divine and religious authority, since all are subject to God, who is over all, and if He lays it upon you to recognize and defend these rights, how can you refuse to do so? If religion is of superhuman interest and affects all alike, how can you ignore it by saying, "It is no concern of ours? It is every one's duty to defend the truth in every possible and available way." He retorted: "Statesmen have a double personality; they are citizen magistrates or public men, and, if so be, they are also Christians; they are Christians in Church, and if it so pleases them, in their private life; but as citizen magistrates or public men they are simply statesmen, just as a judge, when acting as such, ceases to be a father, or a husband, or a professional man, or a banker, and so on; he is simply and solely a judge." "That a State official," I rejoined, "should bear a double personality, I grant; and it is but just and right that the two characters should be distinct, but that they

should be separate and the actions of the one should be contrary to those of the other, I deny. Man is always only one being and his duties and his rights must harmonize and not be in conflict, one with the other. Is a man, because he is placed in power, no longer subject to God? Does he on that account cease to be a Christian? On entering the hall of the legislature does he take his conscience and hang it on the wall of the lobby and on going out take it down again and carry it home with him and to church? Truth is ever truth, whether at home or on the public highways, in parliament or in church, and in no place and at no time may it be disavowed or outraged. We can not divide what is essentially one, the man and the Christian, who can not make two parts of himself, and give one to God and the other to the world, one to heaven and the other to hell. Our whole being comes from God and it must serve Him wholly and at all times. This truth is as clear as a mathematical demonstration.'"[1] My noble interlocutor smiled and put an end to the conversation, and we parted better friends than ever. It seems to me that I have made it sufficiently clear that the principle,

[1]It is indeed true that we are not always obliged to make a profession of faith, but we are always obliged not to do anything that may in the least be contrary to it. True, a public man in the exercise of his office must wholly disregard his private interests and, if need be, sacrifice his personal rights; but no duty is superior to that which binds him to God and to religion, and hence every other duty, even the most exalted, must be subordinated to his duty to God and religion.

so fashionable in our day, of entire separation of the Church from the State is a contradiction. It has been tried in many States already and the result has not been auspicious, and it is to be hoped that many, from the evil nature of the fruit, will come to recognize the evil nature of the tree that produces it. Where the trial has been made the Church is not the worse for it, nay, she finds herself in a position of less hardship than where, in exchange for the protection given her, she has been forced inch by inch to sacrifice part of her freedom.

There are many unmistakable signs from which it is manifest that the principle of separation of Church and State is gaining ground, and it is more than likely that at no very distant date it will be universally adopted by our governments, permeated as they are with the spirit of modern liberty.

Here is the cry that goes up from high and low, from politicians and leaders of the mob: "We have nothing to do with the Church; civil society should be purely laical; we will look to ourselves, let the Church do the same; there shall be no persecution, and neither shall any religion be protected, but all shall be free; we shall provide for ourselves, let the Church do as much for herself." This cry will become universal, it will become the watchword of the century. It will be a trial for

the Church, a grave injustice done her by modern society. This society was born and grew up in the very shadow of the Church; it was made great by the breath of the Gospel of God, and was in duty bound to protect the Church and to diffuse the Gospel. This society, which for so many centuries has acknowledged and proclaimed the Church of Christ and His religion as divine, which itself is the personification of that religion, was in duty bound to be its loyal disciple, its loving daughter, and therefore its resolute defender in as far as the times and special social conditions permitted. And now will it refuse to discharge those duties of gratitude and justice? Must error and truth, Catholicism, Protestantism, Mohammedism, and all other religions, now find equal favor in its sight? Will this society now place its venerable mother, the Catholic Church, on the same footing with the religions that have usurped the rights and the titles of the one Spouse of Christ? It is an atrocious offense, a nameless humiliation, for a mother to be disowned by her children; still she will enter courageously upon the field that is opening before her, confident in her right and trusting in her divine strength. She has conquered enemies who were armed for her destruction; she has conquered protectors, who conspired to enslave her; and she will with still greater ease conquer those who profess that they wish neither to aid her nor

to make war upon her, the men, namely, who profess to be systematically indifferent.

Nay, the Church will find no slight advantage in the new condition of things that confronts her; she will show once more to the world that she owes neither her origin nor her preservation to the human power and agencies that have been withdrawn from her, but that her birth was from on high and that God is her preserver. Knowing and realizing that she can not count on the strength of men, and on the aid of laws and of the governments of earth, she will seek in knowledge and virtue, in holiness and in her own innate strength, the earthly defenses she has lost, and be assured the loss will be more than compensated by the gain.

Only one thing does the Church ask and require of the princes, republics, and governments that wish to be completely divorced from her and that lift on high the banner on which is inscribed the legend, "Separation of State from Church; equal liberty to all." It is to be hoped that this separation of State from Church shall be sincere and honest, and shall not mean the absorption of the Church by the State; that equal liberty to all shall be a real liberty, a liberty that is stable, trustworthy, and ample; that it shall mean liberty at the fireside, in the schoolroom, on the public highways, in church and out of it, in private and public

offices, a liberty reaching from the cradle to the grave. Ye legislators, withdraw, if you will, your privileges and your protection, which we have often felt to be more harmful and embarrassing than beneficial, which have often made us seemingly the accomplices of your errors and crimes, and give us equal liberty with all, the liberty that Justin and Tertullian and other apologists demanded of the Pagan emperors. The Church has no fear of true liberty; she fears only slavery, for she knows that in a conflict between error and truth the latter will easily come off the victor, if the former is not allied with force. She conquered error when error was allied with the greatest power the world has ever known, and why should she not conquer it when it is left to itself? If at some future day, and the day may not be far distant, you rulers of men, after having accomplished your divorce from the Church, frightened by the storms that are rumbling ominously above your heads and that threaten to submerge your Ship of State, already the sport of every wind, should call on the Church for aid, even now she says to you that you may securely count upon her assistance, and that, unmindful of the fact that you cast her off and disowned her, she will be your ally and support in your day of trial.

There was a mother who had a son whom she nourished at her breast, whom she taught at her

knee, whom she fondled and caressed and loved beyond measure; the son grew up, handsome, strong, full of talent; he became rich and powerful and was justly the pride of his mother, whose eye was ever upon him and who pursued him with her love. Having grown to man's estate and reached the meridian of his powers, he became proud and opened his heart to guilty loves; corrupt companions estranged him from his mother, whose very presence was a reproof to him and whose words of counsel, prayer, and admonition awoke in him remorse and turned his guilty pleasures into wormwood. One day, unable longer to bear her presence and her loving admonitions, he cast her out, turned his back upon her, spoke words of insult to her, and would see her no more. He went on in his life of wickedness and squandered an ample patrimony; then he was abandoned by those who had seduced him and who had been the accomplices of his wantonness, and finally he lay sick upon a miserable pallet of straw. His mother heard of it and forgetful of the past hastened to him, cared for him, nursed him back to health, restored him to her love and made good to him the patrimony he had dissipated.

My friends, in this son, so like in every respect to the Prodigal, you see a figure of the modern State; and in this mother, so full of love, you see

a faint image of the Church. The first part of the story is already completed, our children and our grand-children will see the completion of the second.[1]

[1]St. Justin, Tertullian, and other apologists of the first ages of the Church asked the civil power for the same treatment as that enjoyed by the Pagans and by all other religions; they asked for the common rights of all. This is precisely, say modern statesmen and politicians, what we ask and wish.

Why, then, while praising these great names do they blame and condemn us, who in common with them hold the principle that all religions, including the Christian, have common rights? The answer is admirably given by Mgr. Freppel in his Justin (lecture xii). If I had space I would give an abridgment of it.

DISCOURSE II

Knowledge that Leads away from Christ and Knowledge that Leads to Him

THE narrative of the Gospel read in to-day's Mass is a magnificent picture, in which may be seen ranged one after another, each in his proper place, figures the most diverse.

First of all there is the divine babe either in the grotto or in a small cottage near by, to which He has been carried.[1] Beside Him, looking upon Him with inexpressible tenderness and profound veneration, is His virgin Mother; and close to both is a venerable man, his countenance beaming with joy, who silently and reverently gazes now upon the Babe and now upon the Mother. It is a group out of Paradise which all the most famous artists have endeavored in a thousand forms to reproduce. Other figures are scattered here and there in this great picture. Here are some princes, or wise men, or Magi[2] richly dressed and followed by a magnificent retinue, who have come unan-

[1]When the Magi reached Bethlehem they found the new-born Babe in a house: *and entering into the house they found the child.* It would seem that St. Joseph, shortly after the birth of Jesus, secured a house, of course a poor one, in which they lodged.

[2]Scripture does not tell us how many Magi there were; tradition puts the number at three, possibly out of regard for the number, which seems a sacred one. They were learned men, or it may be princes, or wealthy gentlemen.

nounced from far-away countries to adore the new-born Saviour. In another place is the malevolent and ill-visaged Herod, uneasy upon the throne he has purchased with crime and maturing his bloody schemes, and about him is a crowd of fawning courtiers, for whom every whim of the monarch is law and a command that must not be questioned. Away in the background and at the bottom of the picture is the great Sanhedrim gathered in consultation, which, in answer to the inquiry both of Herod and of the Magi: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews," after consulting the Sacred Books reply without hesitating: "In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet."

On Christmas and on the feast of the Circumcision we contemplated the figure of the divine babe and we meditated on His exalted teaching; to-day putting aside the Blessed Mother and her protector, and also the King, pale and trembling on his throne, and his courtiers, we shall fix our eyes upon the Magi who have arrived travel-stained and footsore at Jerusalem, and upon the Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the nation, which interpreting the Scripture in God's name declares that the Expected of the people, the Saviour of the world, is to be born in Bethlehem.

Here are two classes of men differing wholly from each other; both are educated and both are

seeking the truth; the Magi profess only to be learners and humbly ask: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him. Pray tell us this." The Doctors of the Law and the chief priests, gathered in council, and claiming to be teachers, which in fact they were, reply after the manner of teachers. My friends, this is a strange fact and worthy of being profoundly considered. The less instructed, those who profess to be learners and avow their ignorance, find the truth; while those who are better instructed, who possess knowledge and teach it, who have the truth at their doors and point it out to others, still continue to walk in the darkness of error; the former recognize Christ, follow Him, and are saved; the latter do not recognize Him, are cast off, and are lost.

Here, my friends, are designated in the Magi and in the teachers of the Sanhedrim the two great classes of men, into which our society is at this day divided, the believers and the unbelievers; the former less learned yet believers and possessing the truth; the latter learned, very learned, if you will, and yet not believing and deprived of the truth. Why should we fear to speak the truth, bitter though it be and sad beyond words, but still the truth, and it is this: That today the bulk of the learned, or those reputed

learned, either care nothing for the Faith or utterly reject it; while on the other hand the plain people, who are not and can not well be learned, still preserve and love the Faith.

Now, my friends, how is this strange and seemingly inexplicable fact, which we see illustrated in to-day's mystery, and which continues and increases under our eyes, to be accounted for? Why do men of learning show themselves indifferent or hostile to the Gospel and the Church? Why do the plain people, those who toil for a living and who are but scantily provided with a stock of learning, show themselves devout believers in the Gospel and in the Church? It is an inquiry of the utmost importance and will be the subject of our remarks.

Knowledge! After virtue it is the most beautiful ornament and the greatest glory of man. Knowledge is a gift of Heaven, a ray of the divine light, a reflection and a participation of Him who is the eternal Reason of all things and who is called the God of all knowledge. Knowledge elevates and ennobles man; by the use of it he makes nature docile to his will and brings it to his feet; he pulls down hills or tunnels through them, he sails or rather flies over the angry waves of the ocean and goes down into its depths; he careers about through the stars of heaven; he guides the obedient thunderbolt, and with a handful of matter

he cleaves mountains, rends asunder the bowels of the earth, and throws up the bed of the sea. How, then, can this knowledge, that comes from God, keep men at a distance from Him? Why should light produce darkness and knowledge lead to unbelief? Here are lawyers, civil engineers, physicians, literary men, in a word men of learning, destitute of faith and like the teachers of the Sanhedrim, ignoring Jesus Christ, while the plain people and the Magi hasten to Bethlehem, find Him, acknowledge Him, and adore Him. Why is this?

Human knowledge! We do not eschew it, we appreciate and honor it. But let us be frank and honest, my friends. In what is this human knowledge engaged? To what studies do these learned men give themselves? Do they study God? Or Christ? Or the Church? Or the Gospel and religion? Or the soul, its origin and its end? No, no. They study with an ardor and a perseverance, that elicit our admiration, everything from the elephant to the bacterium, from the cedar to the hyssop, from the most distant nebulæ to the microbe; everything comes within the range of their studies; you see them bending over a microscope to scrutinize a cell or analyze an atom; you see them delirious with joy when they are able to announce to the world that they have succeeded in deciphering a hieroglyphic or in interpreting a

mural inscription; but who give themselves to the study of religion, of the things that appertain to God and the soul? Do they ever give them a thought? I leave you, my friends, to answer. Things that are utterly indifferent, the knowledge of which is absolutely useless or serves only to gratify curiosity or to make a show, find the most passionate cultivators, who never weary of their toil; but religion, with which are bound up the most vital interests of this world and the next, of time and eternity, is wholly neglected and, it may be, despised by men of learning. What student of ability would be satisfied with the knowledge he had acquired when he was but twelve years of age? No one; he would be ashamed of himself, and with reason; he is only satisfied with such puerile knowledge when there is question of religion. And there are very few who, to the knowledge of the elements of the catechism acquired at the age of twelve, think it necessary or their duty to add a fuller knowledge of their religion, such as would be in keeping with their advanced years, their more fully developed intellect, the exigencies of the age as they arise, and the developments of modern science.

In ages gone by all the greatest men and the most learned, such as Dante, Petrarch, and Galileo, down to the time of the French Revolution, thought it not only becoming but necessary to add

to their knowledge of the natural sciences a knowledge of the science of religion, which held the post of honor in every university of Europe; but to-day where will you find men who give even a few days in the year to the study of the science of faith and religion? Or who have in their libraries a few books dealing with religion as it should be dealt with? Alas, it is banished from all our Italian universities, as unworthy a chair there, while the newest sciences, and those not worthy the name,[1] all have their chairs. Think of it, theology excluded from the category of sciences, while included in it is the history of religions, of mythology, and of other sciences which I should blush to name.

Who in our days studies the philosophical and theological works of St. Thomas and of other distinguished theologians and philosophers? Who reads the apologists, ancient and modern, that bring out clearly the rational proofs of religion, set forth its sublime and beautiful analogies, and solve the difficulties brought against it and refute the calumnies of which it has been made the target? It would be a risk to assume that they know even the titles of these works. How amaz-

[1]It is heartbreaking! In all our Italian universities, all of ecclesiastical origin, every science has a place, even dentistry, lately introduced, and theology alone is banished. And then to think that Germany and England, and all Protestant countries have in their universities faculties of theology. What a humiliation for us, and what a subject for serious thought!

ing that these men, talented and learned as they are, familiar with all profane science, wholly given over to study, and some of them of worldwide reputation, know nothing of Christ and His religion, or have only a defective knowledge of them, mingled with errors and vulgar prejudices, a knowledge inferior to that of the common people. They are, if you will, learned in all things except the science of religion, and therefore in a worse condition than the lower classes, who are exposed to fewer dangers and are not beset with that fearful enemy of faith—pride of intellect.

I have said that learned and scientific men do not give themselves to the study of religion; this is not quite accurate and I will correct myself. Many of them do study religion, just as they study Moses and the prophets and the teachers of the Law; but where do they study it? In what authors? Under what masters? From what sources? With what motives and purposes? It would be incredible if the fact were not indubitable and of daily experience. These so-called scientific men, who live far separated from religion and regard it only as a thing to be left to old and ignorant women, as a rule have no knowledge of it except what they get from suspected sources and from mendacious publications. The little they have learned of religion has been learned from sceptical and antichristian journals and

magazines, from shameless books that are the fashion of the hour, from romances that mask and misrepresent everything, from histories filled with calumnies, and from scientific works which professedly and deliberately make war upon it. They know religion as it is known in places of public resort, as they hear it spoken of by brilliant irreligious conversationalists, as they see it represented in the modern drama and in other public spectacles, as they hear it vilified in lyceums and universities by professors, mostly unbelievers, who make it a target for their jests and witticisms.

It is amazing, my friends. In any other question, even of trifling importance, no one would dare pronounce judgment without having first heard and weighed attentively and impartially the arguments of the two contending parties; the axiom both of natural equity and of common-sense is well known: "Hear the other side." A judge who should pass sentence after having heard only the accuser would stir up indignation, violate the most elementary rules of justice, and on this account alone would have his sentence annulled. And yet this is precisely what is done in the question of religion. Only its enemies are listened to and its accusers heard, and these accusers are frequently interested parties, either ignorant of what they are talking or writing about, or notorious slanderers. How often have I had occasion to dis-

cuss this question with educated unbelievers, who had read the life of Jesus Christ written by Strauss, Renan, and Pyat and other works of well-known infidels, and who had never read the Gospels and not as much as a page of the numerous and able writers who have refuted these infidels. Is this honest? How can such information lead to Christ or to a knowledge of the truth?

There is also another class of students who sin in a different way and who, far from advancing toward Christ, get only farther from Him. They pore over books, interrogate the sciences, and, if you will, they learn their secrets and are deservedly lauded as men of learning, but the motive of their studies and the scope of their researches is to find something against religion and thus be able to condemn it. These are convinced, how they came to be so I do not inquire, that religion and the Church must be wrong, and their investigations are directed to proving this preconceived idea. Shall we be surprised if they succeed in their efforts? We should be surprised if they did not. They very readily find what they want; the wish they are cherishing in their heart is easily made a reality, and their self-love dresses everything up in colors most flattering to it. It is a law of hallucination that it grows with incredible rapidity, and it counts among its victims many of the educated and not a few of the learned. They

set themselves to study history, physics and geology, psychology, physiology, and all the sciences that are the boast of the age, fully persuaded that the reply of all these will be a condemnation of religious truth, and they have not long to wait for the answer they desire. But the answer is not the true answer of science; it is the reflection of their own minds and ideas, the echo of their own wishes. They wish religion to be in the wrong, and why should it not be if the judge will have it so?[1]

Frequently science leads away from religion and closes the door to it in a way hardly suspected. Every study and every science has its own determinate and proper object and it would be folly to imagine that it can lead us on to the knowledge of objects with which it has nothing to do. Can the vine bring forth any fruit other than the grape? Can a pear-tree produce a lemon? If you wish to study the internal structure of a bacterium or the pores of a leaf, will you look through a powerful telescope? If you wish to explore the heavens will you make use of a microscope? And yet this is

[1]An English admiral was bombarding Copenhagen and the city made so brave a defence that the admiral thought it prudent to cease firing and withdraw. Nelson commanded one of the ships of war and, as every one knows, he was a one-eyed warrior. They called his attention to the signal to cease firing, but he, putting the glass to his blind eye said, "I don't see anything," and went on firing. This fact is narrated by Thiers in his history. This is just what some learned men do in studying religion; they study, but they do not wish to see the truth, and they do not see it, and they say, "We do not see anything."

what many do without adverting to it and others accept their conclusions without discussion. One is a lawyer and profoundly versed in his profession, but has no faith; another is an eminent physician, has a good knowledge of anatomy and is a skilful operator, but he is an unbeliever; a third is a great mathematician, and a fourth a famous literary man, but neither knows anything of religion. Now, though the sciences may indirectly lead to religion, they are not of their nature intended to do so. Just as some may be instructors in music, mathematics, law, and letters and yet be wholly ignorant of botany, astronomy, the ancient languages, painting, and sculpture, so also may men be profoundly versed in the physical sciences and yet wholly destitute of any knowledge of the sacred sciences and of the science of God. A famous astronomer once said: "In searching among the stars with my telescope I have never yet seen the throne of God;" and a no less famous surgeon said: "I have never yet found the soul in the human body, though I have carefully scrutinized every fiber, and yet they say it is there." Such men are like those who would hear with the eyes the harmonies of Verdi, or would see with their ears the angels of Raphael, or would touch with their hands what is sweet to the taste or grateful to the sense of smell. The human sciences will lead us on to a knowledge of the object proper

to each, and only a study of God and of His religion will lead us on to a knowledge of God and religion. When, then, you find men profoundly versed in human sciences and who are not only ignorant of God and of His religion, but despise both, you should not be scandalized; they may be masters in other sciences and you may regard them as such, but in the science of God and religion they are not even learners; they take no interest in either and neither their unbelief nor what they say should give you the least uneasiness. The sciences in which they have acquired a reputation give them no right to set themselves up as judges in another, and a much higher one, which they have not learned. Proud as they are of their scientific knowledge, they find it, not an aid, but rather a drawback to their acquisition of the knowledge of religion.

The teachers of the Sanhedrim knew very well where, according to the Prophet, the Messias was to be born; it was only a few miles distant from them. Why, then, did they not go thither with the Magi, or go later on? Why did they not at least try to find Him? What a contradiction, to know the truth and not to pursue it! How can the conduct of the teachers of the Law be explained, since in the example of the Magi they had a powerful incentive to go to Christ and they did not stir?

I believe that there were three primary motives

that kept these teachers from going to Bethlehem and recognizing the Messias, and these were fear of men in power, human respect, and pride. On hearing the Messias spoken of and on seeing the Magi, Herod was greatly disturbed, and they knew that he was a man who would not stop at anything when his throne was in danger, and that before such a man they had reason to tremble. Now they knew that if they professed to believe in the coming of the Messias, or went to Bethlehem, either with the Magi or later on, or avowed themselves His disciples in the presence of Herod, they would at once incur his anger and be suspected, and the anger and suspicion of that monarch were equally dangerous and by all means to be avoided. Moreover, to go to Bethlehem and seek out the Messias would be all one with declaring themselves the disciples of another, and they themselves were teachers; they would have had frankly to avow themselves as opposed to existing public opinion, which was then but a reflex of what was said and done at the court of Herod; they would have had to break with those who flattered that monarch; and in acknowledging the Messias, just born in an obscure village, in a stable and in the midst of the most squalid poverty, they would, like the Magi, have had to become lowly and humble. And hence these teachers, full of themselves, slaves to public opinion, and trembling before an

angry king, did not move; they remained silent and absolutely indifferent and in spite of their knowledge they knew not Christ.

This is what frequently happens in our own day and under our own eyes. How many, looking up to men in power, to the rich and the great of the world, and seeing that these care nothing for religion and never go to church, rather, that they insolently sneer at it, begin to fear them, to follow in their footsteps, and to take on the air of unbelievers? And how many more fear what the world may say of them and the smiles and sneers of some of their friends? They fear if they go to Church, approach the sacraments, listen to the preaching of the word of God and openly avow themselves Christians, that they will be set down as devotees and bigots, and behind the age. And what do they do? They disappear from view; they are no longer seen at Mass or at sacred functions, or approaching the sacraments; and fearing the gibes of men they bloom out into full-fledged unbelievers.

Others, especially of the cultured classes, are so proud that they can not submit even in religion to acknowledge themselves learners; they fancy that their education and wealth, their titles and the offices they hold, exempt them from sitting in a pew in church and listening to an explanation of the catechism; it would be, they fancy, an exces-

sive humiliation for them and a lowering of their dignity to sit in Church side by side with a mechanic, or a farmer, or their own servant, and hence they stay away, and in spite of their education, of which they are so proud, they end, as did the teachers of the Sanhedrim, by remaining at home, wholly indifferent whether or not they seek Christ and go to Him, as did the Magi.

I think I have given you the reasons why science in general, and modern science in particular, does not lead to Christ and His religion, or rather why it alienates minds from both. Of course of itself it does not produce this effect, and even to suspect this would be erroneous and blasphemous; but it does produce it, because its scope is not primarily the study of religion, but rather of other things; because, if scientific men do give some study to religion, they get their knowledge of it from men and books hostile to it; because they set themselves to the study of it with minds filled with prejudices and inclined to judge of it unfairly; and because they dread the judgments of the world and fear they may compromise their material interests. Now let us inquire what is the knowledge which, like that of the Magi, leads to God. This I shall pass over hurriedly, since what I have already said, by the rule of opposites, casts sufficient light on what I have yet to say.

An ancient and venerable tradition tells us that

the Magi were given to the study of the stars, a science held in high honor among the Orientals. They saw in the heavens a star of marvelous beauty, or a celestial sign, whatever it was, for the Gospel does not tell us. But this sign, though in itself extraordinary, did not tell or determine anything in particular. It might be an extraordinary phenomenon, but hidden and natural, which, while exciting curiosity, determined nothing. What connection could there be between a remarkable sign appearing in the heavens and the birth of the Saviour of the world? In itself there was none at all. And how many would have looked up to it, admired it, and then, shaking their heads and making some passing remark, have gone on their way, turning their thoughts to something else? In order that this prodigious sign might be understood it was necessary that, not only it, but also its significance should be known, and this the Magi could have learned from their acquaintance with the Sacred Books, or from the memorials of the Fathers, or from the traditions of their ancestors, with the aid, of course, of the light of supernatural grace, which God always gives in abundance. These Magi, however, come before us as men, who in the midst of the deep darkness of Paganism kept the light of the divine science burning brightly and daily followed its lead.

But was it enough for the Magi to see the

heavenly sign, to know by the light of Scripture and tradition its significance, and to listen to the inward voice of grace calling them, in order to be led to the feet of Jesus Christ and to work out their salvation? By no means. They had also to heed the voice of grace and the call of the heavenly sign; they had to add to this knowledge their own effort; they had to leave their own country and be deaf to the judgments and the censures of the world, to set out on a long journey and face the discomforts and dangers inseparable from traveling through unknown regions; and they did not hesitate a moment to undertake all this, for they had only one object in view, and gain it they would at any cost, namely, to know and see and adore the new-born Messias and offer Him their tribute of faith.

This is also what you men of learning should do, if perchance you have no faith and live in doubt and in the darkness of error. The star of divine revelation, shining in the heavens, invites you, calls you to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is your life. A blind assent, or a faith without proof, is not asked of you; no, such a faith would be unworthy of you to whom God has given as a guide the light of natural reason, and it would be unworthy of God, who asks a reasonable homage. Faith is not an abdication of reason; the light of the sun does not extinguish that of the lesser stars.

You men of learning can and should seek and find the faith with the torch of your reason, and never forget these weighty words of St. Thomas: "Man would not believe if he did not see that he is obliged to believe."

Let reason, then, be your guide in pursuing this long journey, just as the sign in the heavens was a guide to the Magi; but a calm reason, free from all prejudice, a reason that seeks the truth and the truth alone, a reason that heeds not the maxims, the praise, and the blame of the world and that fears not the vexations and fatigues of long and persevering study.

And is all this enough, my friends? No; the Magi journeyed on toward Jerusalem, following the star and guided by the traditions of their forefathers, but suddenly the star was lost to sight,[1] their friendly guide was gone. Were they discouraged? Did they turn back? No; they were not ashamed to ask light of those who could give it, and though they were themselves educated, rich, and possibly princes, they said: "Ye who know, tell us where He is born who is King of the Jews and the Saviour of the world." They asked light and they received it abundantly: "Go

[1]The Gospel does not really say that the star disappeared from the sight of the Magi, but this is clear from the context of the narrative. The Gospel in saying that the star appeared to the Magi after they left Jerusalem, "And behold the star," etc., gives us to understand that near Jerusalem at least its light was veiled.

to Bethlehem." They were not scandalized at seeing those teachers of the Law so indifferent; they did not lose heart when they saw themselves abandoned by their teachers, who should have gone before them to Bethlehem, or at least have accompanied them. They looked to themselves, discharged what they knew to be their duty, and the indifference of others neither weakened nor lessened their faith.

Ye men of learning, who seek the faith in which alone your troubled and wearied spirit can find peace, if perchance doubts assail you, or the light of truth is obscured, or the length of a difficult journey dismays you, do not hesitate or be ashamed to ask of others counsel, aid, and comfort.

A traveler, though he may be a very learned man, does not hesitate to ask even a child whom he meets to show him the way. You may ask information of the Church, of churchmen, of believing and educated laymen, or you may seek it in books and from other sources, and in this way you will be kept on the right road, your doubts will be dissipated, and your journey made easy. Make use of these, having recourse to them as the Magi had recourse to Herod and the Sanhedrim of Jerusalem.

The Magi had hardly left Jerusalem when they again saw the star or sign in the heavens and it

led them on to Bethlehem. Having arrived there and entered a poor cottage they found the Babe with Mary, His mother, and falling down they adored Him and offered Him gold, incense, and myrrh. The place, the poverty everywhere visible, the helplessness of the Babe, the fact that He was utterly abandoned by those who ought to have been the first to recognize and acknowledge Him, did not shake their faith or cause a shadow of doubt to cross their minds. Learned and rich as they were, and possibly princes, in the ardor of their faith they fell upon their knees at the side of the crib and at the feet of that poor Babe and recognized in Him the Saviour of the world. Their yearnings were satisfied, their joy was complete, and the humble docility of their mind had its crown of reward.

Men of learning, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of the Virgin, is the uttermost term of your long journey in search of truth. When you find Him and offer Him the tribute of your faith and love and of the hardships endured for His sake, you will have found peace of heart and you will experience how sweet it is to love and serve God. The homecoming of the Magi, who, following the light of reason illuminated by faith and after enduring severe and protracted hardships, finally reached Christ, is repeated in the Church in every age from St. Paul, Justin Martyr, and St. Augus-

tine, to Laharpe, Thomas Moore, Frederic Hurter, Palmer, Donoso Cortes, Schouvaloff, Dr. Hirz, and thousands of others, who after having wandered through the tortuous ways of error, following the light of reason, finally found the light of faith, and in the Church, at the feet of Jesus Christ, who dwells within her, they found together with the truth peace of mind and heart.

DISCOURSE III

Human Faith and Divine Faith

MY FRIENDS, it may possibly have happened to you to look upon a mountain from a great distance. Its peaks rising proudly up are covered with snow or wrapped in cloud; its sides, as seen from afar, look to be bare, rugged, and steep, so that it seems impossible to scale them. But go nearer, and as you approach you discover that the mountain-side is covered with flourishing green trees and smiling meadows; here you see lovely glens and fresh living waters gushing forth and murmuring as they fall among the moss-covered rocks; and again, small thriving vineyards, and footpaths and byways, circling round and round, and affording an easy ascent to any who wish to reach the seemingly inaccessible summit, now hidden in clouds and now flooded with light. This is an image of the mysteries of our faith; seen from afar they seem obscure, arid, barren and unapproachable; but draw nearer, contemplate them with an eye lighted up by faith, with a calm and docile mind, and you will find them prolific in exalted teachings and laden with the sweetest fruit, the fruit of truth. And if you mount to the summit of these mysteries, as you

might to the summit of a high mountain, there an immense horizon will open upon you; your lungs will respire more freely, you will breathe a purer and more life-giving air, and your view, ranging through the fields of heaven and over a vast expanse of earth, will make you realize that you are nearer to God.

Such, my friends, is the mystery of the Epiphany, which we celebrate to-day. Behold the Magi, wise men or princes, and it may be both, coming from the East and arriving at Jerusalem, and their inquiring, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They seek truth, the Teacher of truth, and they do not rest until they find Him. But what is it that draws these Magi from their native homes? What is it that conducts them to Jerusalem and thence to Bethlehem? What is it that makes them follow the mysterious sign seen in the heavens and brings them before Herod; that makes them despise the hardships of the journey and the judgments of the world? What is it that brings them to their knees before the poorest of babes, that inspires them to present Him with the richest of gifts, and that floods their hearts with gladness? My friends, one thing alone can do all this—faith, that living and operative faith, of which these Gentiles were the first-fruits and to which we are fortunate in being the heirs.

As there are many at this day who regard faith as an infirmity of the human mind, as the heritage of the vulgar who can not reason and of man in his intellectual infancy; and as there are others who proclaim that it is a stumbling block to science and contrary to the dignity of man, it is my purpose to show you briefly: First, that faith is not only needful, but absolutely necessary to man, who willingly or unwillingly must submit to it and obey it, and that it is an essential condition to the acquisition of all knowledge. Second, that faith in God and in Him who speaks in God's name responds to the needs of human nature, dignifies and ennobles it, and is an act the most perfect and meritorious that a reasonable being can offer Him.

Among men to believe is not only a need, it is an inexorable necessity; take away belief and you have broken up the family, shattered society, torn away the root of the greater part of knowledge, reduced man to the most desolate isolation, and condemned him to die both physically and morally.

What is more natural, beautiful, joyous than friendship! It gladdens life, is a balm in misfortune, a stay to virtue, light and counsel in doubt; it completes and crowns the family; in it the heart finds assuagement in its grief and its purest joys when happy. Wo to a man who has not friends! He is as a pilgrim without a companion or a hospitable roof; he is as a wayfarer who traverses the

desert of life and finds neither the shade of a tree nor an oasis where he may lie down and rest.

What is the origin and root of friendship? On what does it feed? Mutual faith. If you can doubt the words, the protests, the sincerity of a friend's acts, or if a friend can doubt you or your acts, your friendship will be impossible, or if born and already grown strong it will at once wither away and die. In that day in which you cease to trust your friend, your heart will close up and friendship will be as a flower to which the sky refuses rain and dew. The basis of friendship is and will ever be a belief in friendship itself.

Contracts, commerce, and the innumerable relations that exist among men, binding them together, making trade possible and easy, supplying present needs and creating wealth and the means of securing comforts, all have their foundation in mutual faith, expressed in a form that is called *credit*, the source of the material well-being of society. Should man no longer trust his fellow man, or commercial bodies other commercial bodies, the bond that binds them together would be snapped and the movement of capital and labor would suddenly stop, as when the heart ceases to beat circulation is arrested and life extinguished. A passenger trusts his coach driver, and so also does he trust the locomotive engineer who turns on and cuts off the steam, and the captain who commands

a steamship or sailing vessel; the sick man trusts the physician and both trust the pharmacist; the prince or ruler trusts his ministers and his ministers trust him; the writer writes with the hope of having his readers believe him, and readers read his books because they believe him; the employer believes his employees and the employees believe their employer. Why does a father trust his child to an educator or teacher except that he has faith in him?

Hundreds of thousands of laborers and emigrants in search of work or land or adventure leave the shores of Europe, cross the Indian or the Atlantic Ocean, disembark at the ports of America or Asia, or Australia, traverse wild forests and seemingly boundless prairies, climb mountains, penetrate into valleys, and pass over great rivers. Why these long and fatiguing voyages and journeys? Because they believe some one who told them of these countries and they felt rising in their hearts the hope of a more promising future. They believed and they set out, they believed and they faced difficulties and dangers.

Here we are, say, in the presence of the majesty of a court of justice; the judges sit solemn and silent on the benches, the accused is on one side and the accusers on the other, and with them the lawyers for the prosecution and defence. The

witnesses come forward and in the presence of the Crucifix and with their hand on the Gospel take an oath; when interrogated they reply, and their words and testimony will either release the prisoner and send him back to the bosom of his family or cast him into prison for five, ten, or twenty years. It is a terrible power, that wielded by judge and jury. Now on what does the sanctity of the oath and the truth of the testimony rest? On the faith that is reposed in the witnesses, and in the justice of the judge and jury.

Justice, then, public order, liberty, civil life, and physical as well, all depend upon the faith we put in the word and consciences of men. We believe that men are just, we invoke their sentence, all acquiesce in it, and society goes on living tranquilly.

Here is a man who holds upon his knee a little boy; he caresses him, gazes upon him with inexpressible tenderness, kisses him, folds him to his breast and says: "My son, you are my joy and treasure!" If a shadow of a doubt could enter into his mind that this dear child was not his son, how his heart would be rent! Whence comes the certainty that makes him happy? From his faith in the love and loyalty of a woman.

Here is a son and a daughter who call a man and a woman by the sweet names of father and mother; they are happy in their love, they throw

themselves into their arms with the utmost freedom; they would give their lives for them, because from them they received theirs. How, my children, do you know that this man and woman are your father and mother? Who has given you that assurance? The faith, and the faith alone that you put in the words of this man and woman, who say to you: "We are your parents." On this faith the whole family is poised. To this faith must be traced the origin and stability of all the rights and most sacred and delicate duties that bind together and safeguard parents, children, kinsfolk and relatives, property and inheritances, in a word everything that lies at the root of domestic life and social well-being.

Nor is this all, my friends. Why does the soldier volunteer to serve under the flag of his country and without hesitating an instant go whither his commanding officer by word or sign bids him go? Because he has faith in the general, or in him who holds in his hands the destiny of his country.

All ye who are listening to me a few years back sat on the benches of a schoolroom; you started out by learning the letters of the alphabet, and then you learned to spell, and then to compose, and finally to express thoughts, ideas, and their various and manifold relations in lengthy discourses. Had you at the age of four or five not

believed the teacher, who taught you the alphabet and the meaning and value of each word, what would be the worth of all you had learned? Is it not true that you began by trusting your parents, who committed you to the teacher, and then by trusting the teacher, who instructed you, and hence to-day you are what you are.

Say that there is here in our midst the most erudite man in all the world to-day, and say that his knowledge of all the sciences, of which modern progress so boasts, is complete and perfect; now if we except mathematics, a knowledge of which he has acquired directly through his reasoning powers, and a few other sciences which he has acquired by his own experience and the immediate testimony of the senses, the entire store of the learning, which he so abundantly possesses and which has made him famous must be traced to that faith which nature taught him to repose in those from whom he learned those sciences.

All ancient history, nearly all geography, the most important parts of physics, political economy, statistics, and the other sciences all rest upon the natural faith which is accorded to those who cultivate them. If the man whom the world salutes as a prodigy of erudition be stripped of all the information he has acquired by putting faith in others and be reduced to such information as he has gained by his own immediate and exclusive

study and experience, you will find that he has dropped down almost to the level of the ordinary man. My friends, how pitiable our knowledge would be, even that of the greatest of men, should we eliminate from our patrimony all that part of it, which is derived from and based upon the authority of others, or, what is the same thing, on the natural faith we put in the statements of the learned! Take away this natural faith and you take away the cornerstone of all the sciences and of all progress, and man, every single man, would always be obliged to do this work for himself and to reconstruct out of his own head the whole fabric of science. Progress is only possible by one generation accepting the labors of the generations that preceded it, and from this point going forward to the discovery of other truths, which it in turn transmits as a secure heritage to the coming generation, and so on from century to century. To reject natural faith as regards the sciences would be to break the bond of continuity and to be always beginning anew without advancing a step; it would be to separate man from man, and to shut up each one in that brief period of time and point of space in which he is born and lives and dies; it would be to put an end to all science and progress and to condemn society and man himself to an everlasting infancy. Any reasonable man, then, must recognize that

natural faith, by which one man trusts another, and one society comes into possession of the treasures of knowledge of another society, is as necessary as is air to breathe, or food to sustain life, or light to see. Those were profound words that St. Theophilus of Antioch wrote to the pagan Antolicus: "No one can learn the first principles of any art or science without faith."[1] Eusebius of Cæsaria repeated almost the same words when he said: "All private and public life is dependent upon faith."[2] This truth is so clear and obvious that Aristotle, by the light of natural reason alone, expresses it with great precision in these words: "Every learner must believe."[3] There is nothing so seemly and natural to man as to believe his fellow man in all things of the natural order. And if this were not so, why would God have given man eyes to read, and ears to hear, and a tongue to make known his thoughts? Whenever this faith is lacking society suffers, trembles, and seems in an agony.

Man believes man, a society or a company of men believes another such society or company, one generation believes the generation that preceded it, and so individuals, societies, generations join hands, are linked together, and the heritage

[1]Omnis artis et scientiae fundamentum *sine fide* nemo discet.
[2]Vitam universam ex fide suspensam tenere.
[3]Oportet discentem credere. St. Augustine with his usual ability develops this truth in his beautiful work, entitled *De Utilitate Credendi.*

of science and arts becomes the property of all; the creations of genius, intellect, and heart are preserved, augmented, and perfected; and if man believes man and trusts him why should he not believe God and trust Him? If faith is the basis of all the relations of men, both civil and social, why should it not be the basis of their relations with God?

Man believes the word of his neighbor or friend, of a witness or teacher or historian, because he takes it for granted that they are all educated and honest, and why should he not believe God when He makes His divine will known to him? A child believes a man and woman who say to him, "We are your parents, your father and mother," and why should he refuse to believe God when He says to him, "I am thy Father, thou art my beloved child"? What inconsistency, what a contradiction! What an affront to God!

I know some of you will object, saying: "If God Himself should speak to me, then I would bow my head in the dust, and I would say to Him, 'I believe, I believe everything; I do not comprehend, but Thy word is sufficient.' But these who speak to me are men, men just like myself. Why should they thrust themselves between me and God? Has He any need of them? Why should man shut out from me the majesty of God? I look out over the face of the earth and I see everywhere thousands

and thousands of men, all boasting that they are messengers of Heaven, sent of God, and all inflicting upon me in His name doctrines and laws wholly at variance with one another. Why should I believe one rather than the other, the Catholic priest rather than the orthodox priest, the Protestant minister rather than the Mussulman ulema? I do not wish to be deceived by any one; let God speak to me and I am ready to hear; His word shall be the absolute and immutable law of my belief and conduct." This is particularly the language of the rationalist and unbeliever. Let us examine it.

And who is this man who would prescribe to God the way in which He ought to make known His will to men? Certainly He could, if He would, speak to man now as He spoke to Adam, to Abraham, and to Moses, to the prophets and to the apostles; He could, if He would, speak to him visibly and externally, or invisibly and internally, enlightening his mind with His supernatural light. Who can doubt it? But man's boldness goes beyond all limits when he dares to say to God: "I want You to speak to me Yourself; from You alone will I take Your commands; I will not allow mediators of any kind between me and You." What? And you, parents and employers, may make your wishes known to your children and employees by word of mouth, in writing, or by

any other means, when and as you please, and God may not do as much to you? Is He less than you? Is He, then, to wait until you determine the way and the manner by which He may communicate with you, reveal to you His secrets, and make known to you His laws? These very questions, as you will agree, are a most explicit and peremptory answer to the objection.

But it will be said: "If God Himself should speak directly to me, there would be no possibility of the shadow of a doubt; my faith in His word would be full, absolute, and immovable; but when others, who may deceive or be deceived, come between me and Him, my faith wavers and I feel coming upon my mind a doubt that worries and oppresses me."

And you think that if God spoke directly to you, you would not have the shadow of a doubt! In this you delude yourself. Once the voice of God had become silent, or the light had faded away, might you not say: "May not all this be an hallucination or an illusion? May it not have been a dream? Did not this light I saw, or this voice I heard, which seemed to me to come from on high, issue from my inmost soul? Who can assure me that I am not the sport of my imagination or of some other artifice or fraud? Deceptions are so real and frequent! The forces of nature are so mysterious and potent that they may easily be

mistaken for the powers of God." Even if God spoke to you or enlightened you directly you would still not always be free from doubt.

"Yes," he goes on, "but to receive the commands of God through others always opens a way to error, to fraud, or at least to the dread that there may be error and fraud."

Yes, provided you have not the means of ridding yourself of all doubt as to the knowledge and honesty of him who stands between you and God. But if you have no reason to believe that he who bears to you the commands of Heaven is either himself deceived or wishes to deceive you, why should you doubt? What difference does it make, whether you have seen God with your own eyes and heard Him with your own ears, or whether others like you have seen or heard Him? Are not the eyes and ears of others as trustworthy as yours and possibly more so? What you would do to make sure that it is God who really speaks to you and teaches you, others did and should have done, for they were men as well as you and were as much concerned in not being the sport of their imagination or the dupes of some fraud or trickery. If you receive a message from a friend by word of mouth, or by letter, or through a trustworthy person, you do not bother yourself about how it came to you; you only take the necessary pains to assure yourself that it is true, but the

means by which the message was conveyed to you is a matter of utter indifference to you. Say that a person of well-tried honesty, who has no possible interest in deceiving you, narrates a fact to you; or that a learned and upright professor teaches you some doctrines that he has learned from others; or that an aide-de-camp of the commanding general on a field of battle bears to you, a field officer, an order by word of mouth, would you deny the fact, reject the doctrine, and refuse to obey the order? A doubt as to any of the three would never cross your mind; and yet all this information comes to you only through others, and these might possibly deceive you. You throw your arms about the neck of a woman who is said to be your mother, you love her and would give your life for her. But how do you know she is your mother? Because she herself and others tell you so. But what is the basis of your certitude? You see that this woman tenderly loves, makes every manner of sacrifice for you; her whole life is one continuous proof of her motherly affection for you; you feel that she can not deceive you, that others who say as she does can not deceive you, and without an instant's hesitation you say, "This is my mother." And then she says, "My son, this man is your father, I assure you he is; love, respect, and obey him as such." And you at once cry out: "My father!" and throw your-

self into his arms. Why should we not do the same in the case of the Church, who comes to us as a loving mother, and who has given us a thousand proofs of her love. Why should we not believe her when she says to us: "In the persons of the apostles I have seen Christ; I have heard His teaching; I give this teaching to you. He is my divine Spouse, of Him have I begotten you." Would you, could you doubt the sincerity of such a mother?

We know that the Church is ready to place before us the most irrefragable proofs; we know that she is sent of God and from Him she has received all the doctrines that she announces. We know that all the proofs which the Church presents to us of her divine origin and mission were given to her by Christ, that they have been examined, sifted, and found lucid, indubitable, and evident by fifty generations of men, and by an army of scholars in whom learning, talent, honesty, and even sanctity were wonderfully combined. We know that millions of men lived and died in the bosom of this Church and sacrificed their lives for her amidst the most atrocious tortures. Who, then, can doubt her teaching without doing violence to reason itself?

Look at the Magi. From the very first they believed and obeyed the celestial sign; they believed the words of the teachers of the Synagogue, the

interpreters of the Divine Books; they went forward to Bethlehem, they found and adored the divine babe; they never dreamed of requiring that God should speak to them directly; they accepted His word as it came to them by signs and through men. Nor is this all. Having arrived in the presence of Him whom they so diligently and resolutely sought they saw but a babe and not the majesty of God; this majesty was veiled under the most humble of human forms. God has in every age and in ways the most diverse made known His will to men, and never has He permitted them to look upon His countenance. Even when He spoke to the innocent Adam, to the patriarchs and prophets, He spoke to them through signs and symbols; and the Word Himself, made man, conversed with man through His humanity. In the present order of things God is always veiled and more or less hidden, even when He speaks directly; only in heaven will the veil be rent asunder; only then, when faith shall be no more, shall we hear and see Him unveiled, face to face as He is.

But it will be said again: "Of what advantage is faith, and especially faith in mysteries, since these are unintelligible truths? Why not let the veil fall which so humbles us and makes so many rebel against faith"?

Because in our actual condition faith is neces-

sary, just as it is necessary to look at the sun through a smoked glass, if one will not be blinded by its light; just as a walking-stick is necessary to a lame man who wishes to climb a steep mountain, and just as it is necessary to have a lighted lantern to make one's way through the darkness until sunrise. It is necessary, because God being infinite and we finite, faith must supply where reason fails. The mysteries give us a fuller knowledge of God, since they make us know and feel His infinite greatness and make us touch as if with our hand our own weakness, and hence beget and nourish humility. Faith in the mysteries is necessary because by faith we render the greatest possible honor to God. We say to Him: "Lord, the greatest gift Thou hast given us is reason, a spark of Thine own reason; and yet our reason does not comprehend that which Thou dost oblige us to hold with the greatest certainty. Thou hast said it, that is enough; Thou canst neither deceive nor be deceived; Thou speakest and we believe. Accept the sacrifice of our reason, the most worthy sacrifice a reasonable being can offer Thee."

My friends, this is the sacrifice that the Magi, the learned men that came out of the Orient, offered to God. Guided by a star and by the word of faith heard at Jerusalem, they fell down at the feet of this most poor babe, who was possibly ly-

ing on a handful of straw, and they acknowledged Him as their King, their God and their Redeemer. O wonderful power of faith, which bids the senses and the voice of flesh be silent, lifts us up even to God, and makes us give our mind and will into the keeping of His Word.

DISCOURSE IV

Christ and Herod
The Church and the Political Powers

EVERYTHING in the Gospel is admirable and worthy of being carefully considered, because everything is true and written for our instruction. But the facts that refer directly to the adorable Person of Jesus Christ are, of course, beyond all others the most admirable and most worthy of being attentively studied. There is no need of wasting words to prove this; it is manifest. Jesus Christ is both God and man and hence to the eyes both of faith and reason everything that comes from Him or in any way refers to Him must be ineffably great and admirable.

Now what does the Gospel tell us of the Babe, Jesus Christ, on this solemn festival? How and where does it introduce us to Him? What is taking place about Him? He is still at Bethlehem; the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph are standing by the cradle adoring the divine babe and drinking in bliss from the very sight of Him. This babe, who has here reached the very uttermost term of human infirmity, exhibits a power wholly divine. In the heavens a miraculous sign announces His coming; from the heart of the Orient

He draws to His cradle three princes, or illustrious wise men, who come and adore Him and lay at His feet rich and symbolical gifts; at Jerusalem and in the Grand Council He puts everything in confusion; the teachers of the Law search the Holy Books; the city is in a ferment; Herod and his court are troubled: *Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.* As you see, that mysterious and terrible, and at the same time natural and necessary drama, which has gone on growing uninterruptedly down through all the centuries to our own day and will continue until the end of time, began about the cradle of the Babe of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ had scarcely appeared on earth when princes and kings were in commotion; the latter feared that He would invade their kingdoms, snatch the crowns from their brows, and occupy their thrones, and they at once set about defending themselves against these fancied attacks, and to anticipate them they send cruel ruffians to kill Him in His cradle; the former, on the contrary, joyful and full of faith, hasten to Him, profess themselves His sons and subjects, and honor themselves by offering Him the tribute of their earthly gifts.

Thus, we see at Bethlehem in the Person of the child Jesus a forecast of the history of the Church in her relation to kings, republics, and all the powers of earth, a history that is going on un-

folding under our own eyes, not in Europe alone, but in all the Christian world. Have kings and emperors, republics and rulers of peoples any reason for distrusting and fearing the Church and, so to say, arming themselves against her, as if she were a menace to their rights and about to usurp them? Would it not be better for them to imitate the Magi and recognize, honor, and assist her as a mother? These are the two thoughts which I shall try to develop, and you will agree with me that they involve practical questions of the highest importance.

Any one who has studied and is at all familiar with the history of the Church from the days of Christ to our own will not say that this statement is exaggerated; namely, that nearly all governments, no matter what has been or is their form, have regarded the Church with suspicion. Emperors, absolute kings, oligarchies, republics, democracies, wicked governments, and even good governments, aye, even those that frankly professed themselves Catholic and loyal to the Church, have one and all more than once done her violence and caused her to shed bitter tears. All this can be proved from the open pages of history and from indubitable historical monuments, and it is useless to try to misinterpret facts or to conceal them. In the presence of Christ and of His Church all political powers are more or less dis-

turbed and the people as well: *King Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.* And why? They fear the Church may tear away a bit of their purple and seize their scepter. Dolts! Let them listen to the sublime words which she to-day dins into their ears: "He does not seize earthly kingdoms, who gives celestial; *Non eripit mortalia, qui regna dat cœlestia.*" Listen to what the great Hosius of Cordova, the Father of Councils, says in writing to Constantine: "God has given thee empire; whosoever attempts to seize thy authority violates a divine ordinance. It is not lawful for us to aspire to the government of the things of earth."

And St. John Damascene says, writing to an emperor: "The palace is yours; the Church is ours. We obey you in all things that refer to the world."[1] Again, listen to the solemn words of Leo XIII: "The civil order is wholly subject to the power (of princes) and to their sovereign authority"[2] Finally, Bellarmine, a prince among theologians, did not hesitate to say that if the Pope (which never will happen) should decide absolutely in civil and political questions, having no reference to faith and morals, neither princes nor people would be obliged to obey him.[3] Can teaching clearer than this, or stronger language be asked?

[1]Or. 2.
[2]Encyclical *Diuturnum*, June 29, 1881.
[3]*Non est audiendus; nec terentur principes aliique ei parere.—De Rom. Pontif.*, lib. ii, c. 29.

Hence, all rulers and governments, emperors and kings, presidents and ministers, parliaments and peoples, may sleep tranquilly; they may choose the form of government that best befits their genius and character, their interests, traditions, and present needs; the Church is wedded to none. Saving her rights she is ready to approve whatever is just and for the public weal. They may make what constitutions they like and govern as they will, provided they do not lose sight of the general good; they may pass such laws as are suitable to the special exigencies of the social life of their subjects; they may condemn and punish transgressions and crimes according to the letter of their penal codes; they may provide as they please for the organization of their administration; they may appoint and dismiss their employees whenever they see fit; they may excavate ports and construct fortresses; they may maneuver with their ships and armies when and as they please; they may erect monuments and perfect their arms; they may maintain peace as long as they think it desirable and when necessary declare war; they may make up their budgets of income and outlay; they may levy taxes and peacefully collect them; they may regulate the statutes and obligations of companies and corporations formed within the territory of the State; they may encourage every useful project and stimulate

progress, and they need never fear that the Church will cross their path or put a single obstacle in the way to impede the full exercise of their rights and their legitimate action.[1]

Ye statesmen, who are so often fearful lest the Church should go beyond the limits established by Christ and usurp your rights, be honest and tell us if these principles, which for us churchmen are sacred and immutable, can in any way be a menace to your independence? We know, and we hold it as of faith, that your power comes from on high, from God; that your power is ordained to maintain order and administer justice among your people and to lead them to such prosperity and temporal happiness as are possible here below, and we know that to resist your power is to resist the ordinance of God; how, then, could we lay a hand upon your power or abridge it, we who profess and preach openly that all must respect the order established by God? No, no; do not do us the injustice of believing that we would invade your rights or make light of the power God has conferred upon you. Bear well in mind that we shall always render to Cæsar, that is, to you, that which is Cæsar's. But if, following the constant and infallible teaching of the Church, we proclaim the full and perfect independence of civil and political powers, in the sphere assigned them

[1]Monsabré, Conf. 59.

and as regards the material and temporal well-being of peoples, we can not be silent concerning another truth, which seems to be either forgotten or practically denied.

Both faith and reason teach us that the life of man is not circumscribed by the few and toilsome days of this present life; it begins on earth and will be completed and perfected in heaven; it starts in time and moves on toward eternity; man sows here and reaps in heaven; the present life is subordinated to the life to come as the body is subordinated to the soul. Now, my friends, who is charged by God with the duty of leading men on to the possession of the life beyond this world, to a life in heaven? The Church, as every one knows. She must take by the hand men, for whose temporal prosperity the civil power is providing, and by the means she has received from Christ lead them on to everlasting happiness. And here, I do not deny, is the root of those suspicions and that mistrust which the civil power frequently entertains and harbors against ecclesiastical authority; here is where there is danger of the two disagreeing and clashing. Both exercise their authority over the same subjects, but in different ways and by different means, and in an order and for an end wholly diverse. The civil authority acts directly and chiefly on the body and regulates external conduct, but how can it act on the body and

regulate external conduct without making its action felt on the soul and influencing internal acts? The ecclesiastical authority acts directly and chiefly on the soul and regulates internal acts, but how can it do so without making its action felt also on the body and regulating external conduct? It is impossible; man is one sole being and what goes on in the soul is necessarily reflected in the body, and what the body does is necessarily reflected in the soul. If man thinks, he also speaks; if he wills, he also acts; his internal acts and the external expression of them are being constantly so interwoven that it is impossible to touch upon one without touching upon the other.

How, then, can the limits of these two powers, the civil and the ecclesiastical, acting upon the same subjects, be determined? God, who established both, must certainly in His sovereign wisdom have so disposed things that the two should not clash or be in conflict with each other, and that they should be a mutual aid to each other. But how? Listen. An army, say, is marching under the direction of two generals, each of whom exercises a distinct and independent authority over it. One must furnish all provisions and ammunitions of war, must see that the roads are in good condition, and secure and assign lodgings and barracks; the other looks after everything else. The one guides and accompanies the army

to the first halting place; there he surrenders all authority into the hands of the other, who conducts the army to its destination. How should the two generals carry themselves toward each other? They should in going on to the first halting place act in perfect harmony, and they should not permit any disagreement between them that would be detrimental to either. The general whose duties cease at the first halting place should use every means to prevent the other, who is to prosecute the march, from being in any way incommoded and he should see that he is provided with everything necessary to reach his destination with the least possible difficulty. The good of the army, the honor of the two commanders, and the very nature of things all require this.

Now the whole body of Christians is an army marching on first to one halting place and then to its final destination. The commander who guides it over the first part of the march, and who has the means and who is in duty bound to lead it on to earthly prosperity, is the civil power; the commander who escorts it to its final destination, or to an everlasting life beyond the grave, is the Church. It is the duty, then, of the civil and political power so to govern this body of Christians that it may secure for them the greatest possible temporal good without putting any obstacle in the way of the everlasting good for which they were

created. Nor is this all. It is not only the duty of the civil power not to put any obstacle in the way of its Christian subjects attaining their eternal good, but it should, by every means and in every way it judges best, make the path smooth for the Church and afford her all proper and possible assistance in carrying on her high mission.

A civil and political government that should systematically ignore the fact that man's life is not limited to the present one, and that he is to live and be happy in a world beyond this, which is the destiny of every man, would lose sight of its most sacred duty, would fail to recognize the nature of man, and would put him on a level with the brute creatures whose lives are circumscribed by time, and would, moreover, expose itself to the danger of outraging reason and of trampling on that liberty to which all men, and the Church their guide, have a right in order to be able to attain their supreme end. No; civil and political power may not govern Christian society as if its members were born only to eat and drink, to dress and enjoy themselves and to end in the grave. A civil and political power which has a consciousness both of its own mission and of the dignity of man, while it is wholly intent on securing for society the greatest possible well-being in time, will recognize that man is called to another life, a life of endless happiness beyond the grave, and will aid

him in attaining it. If it does not, it will be like the master who, in teaching pupils the elements of knowledge, takes no account of their ulterior and fuller development later on; or it is like one who, in making the different parts of a complicated piece of machinery, loses sight of the use to which it is to be put; or, again, it is like a captain of a vessel who puts out to sea and knows only the first port in which he is to cast anchor, as if the voyage were to end there; or, finally, it is like one who gives all his attention to the development of the organs of his body and to the satisfying of all its cravings, and never a thought to the development of his intellect and the training and formation of his will.

But it will be said: "The scope of civil and political power and its end is to secure for the people temporal prosperity, not eternal happiness; this latter is the business of the Church and to her we commit it; all that can be asked of the civil power is that it shall create no difficulties for the Church and put no obstacles in her way."

In working for the great cause of the good of the people and of their greatest good, and surely their everlasting happiness is such, we should all, as Tertullian says, be soldiers, and we should all do our very utmost to gain this good for ourselves and to secure it for our fellow men. Indifference to so great a good is culpable and a disavowal of

that charity which is incumbent upon us all; it is culpable in the individual, and why should it not be culpable in the civil power? If the private citizen is in duty bound to remove from his fellow men such evils as he can remove, and to procure for them such goods as it is in his power to procure, how much greater will be the obligation of the civil power to do the same? Has truth no claim upon this power?

Every man must know and serve God in his own place in life, the workman as a workman, the judge as a judge, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, each according to his condition; no one can exempt himself from this law, nor can God dispense him from it without abdicating His sovereignty, and why ought not kings and those who hold in their hands the destinies of peoples do the same? St. Augustine says: "The king (and the same may be said of every magistrate who exercises public power), serves God in two ways, as a man and as a king; as a man he serves Him by working faithfully and by regulating his personal conduct so as to please God; as a king, by giving a timely sanction to laws and by rigorously enforcing them, thus insuring justice and preventing crime."[1]

And St. Thomas, his faithful disciple, says: "The means ought always to be in keeping with

[1]St. August. *ad Bonaf.* Epist. 185.

the end; . . . the end of this earthly life is the happiness of heaven, and *it is the duty of the ruler* to secure to the people the manner of life that will attain it. Hence he ought to ordain what will lead to heavenly happiness and *as far as possible* prohibit what may draw people from it. In as far as is within the competency of government the legislator ought so to direct the citizens that they may live virtuously, and he ought to set supreme happiness before him as the end to be attained both by himself and by his subjects."[1] Can a plainer or more simple teaching be imagined? I think not.

Some one may object: "If the civil and political power must not only refrain from putting any obstacle in the way of the Church, but also hold out a hand to her and help her along her journey to her goal beyond this world, then we are thrown back into the heart of the Middle Ages; then will the civil and political power be dependent on the ecclesiastical; it will be obedient to her bidding and will be the executor of her orders; we shall be back again in the palmy days of the Inquisition." My friends, have no fear of anything of the kind. The Middle Ages are gone, never to return; the Inquisition is dead and buried, and the dead, unless by a miracle, do not rise again. I have already quoted for you the words of Leo XIII, but

[1] *De Regim. princip.*, lib. i, 15.

it will do no harm to repeat them. The civil order is *wholly subject* to the power and sovereignty of princes or of him who is the supreme ruler, no matter what the form of government may be. When St. Thomas says that the prince or ruler ought to ordain what leads to the happiness of heaven and to forbid what draws people from it, he adds with his usual precision of language: "In as far as this is possible and opportune."[1] In this very simple phrase we have the limits laid down that safeguard the independence of civil and political power, and we have its duties toward religious authority set forth. As to the Inquisition, as it existed in time past, that can never be again. But the Church asks the civil and political power, in the name of God and of liberty of conscience, not to make war on her or to put obstacles in her path, and if she begs it to stretch forth its potent hand both to aid her in carrying forward her mission and to defend her from her enemies, she has never asked, and never will ask, and never can ask, the civil and political power to inflict religion on any one by force. She disavows all sorts of compulsion, because she knows that only an homage freely given is acceptable to God and that in religion only persuasion should be used and not force.[2]

[1]Secundum quod fuerit possibile—secundum quod congruit.

[2]I can not resist the temptation to give here the authority of a living cardinal, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. An atheist Sun-

We have shown that the political power has nothing to fear from the Church and we have pointed out what should be its attitude toward her; let us now see what great benefits the civil power may derive from the moral influence and eminently conservative and controlling action of the Church.

Man being a rational being is also a religious being, or, I should rather say, he is religious because he is rational. And man being religious must admit the existence of a Supreme Being, and as a consequence must admit an assemblage of duties that bind him to God, and this assemblage of duties constitutes religion. Only the atheist can

day-school was opened in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1889. The Protestant clergy called upon the mayor to close it. Then the cardinal wrote as follows: "Without examining what are the rights of the civil authority in this matter, my own opinion is that this anti-religious tendency can not be radically cured by repressive measures. Man *is not* converted by compulsion; he must voluntarily surrender the citadel of his soul. Compulsion only shuts up the poison in the interior of the social body, where it ferments in secret. Our divine Saviour never appealed to the sword to maintain His teaching. When His disciple on one occasion drew his sword to defend Him he was rebuked by Him and ordered to put the sword back in the scabbard. The arms of our warfare are, as the Apostle says, not material but spiritual. They are reasoning, persuasion, and charity. The sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God, is the only sword I would have unsheathed against the children of unbelief; the only fire I would have kindled is the fire of divine love, which Our Lord came to bring into the hearts of men. In a word I would inculcate that Christianity is useful in all things, both for this life and for the life to come." I should not dare enlarge the principle of liberty to this extent, which I think excessive. But the fact that this doctrine is frankly preached on the other side of the Atlantic by a learned *cardinal* is very significant. (See Correspondant, April 25, 1893.) (Not having the text of his Eminence's words at hand I have given a literal translation of the Italian of Bishop Bonomelli.—TR.)

be without religion; but since atheism, if such a thing really exists, is an absurdity, so also is irreligion. As the existence of mad men is an anomaly that can not prove the non-existence of reason, so also the existence of a few atheists can not prove the non-existence of religion. But as public justice is embodied in the courts, which represent and administer it, so also is religion everywhere and always embodied in the priesthood that represents, interprets, and applies it; and hence religion and the priesthood are combined and united, just as are justice and the magistracy. Now I will ask you to consider Christianity as it is found embodied in the Church and in the priesthood, which from the youngest levite on up through all its grades centers in the Roman Pontiff, the supreme head. An organization more marvelous, stable, and powerful than this, whether we consider its members and its discipline, or the firm and intimate conviction of its members, or the works in which it is prolific, or its antiquity and the authority it enjoys, and its presence in every quarter of the globe, has never been seen and never will be seen again.

Let us confine ourselves to Italy, where there are more than seventy thousand priests, subject to and under the guidance of three hundred bishops, and all obedient to the Roman Pontiff. They are scattered everywhere, in the most humble

hamlets, on mountains and in plains, on hills and in valleys, in towns and cities; from the very character of their ministry they are welcome to every home, and in the sacrament of Penance they are made the depositaries of the most jealously guarded secrets of conscience; they visit hospitals and colleges, they sit at the bedsides of the sick; on Sundays and feast-days and on other occasions they address assembled multitudes, preaching the word of God to them, and all speak with the same voice. And what do they say? What do they preach, what do they enforce indifferently upon young and old, men and women, masters and servants, upon those who rule and those who obey, now upon all assembled together, and now upon each individually? They proclaim the rights of God and the duties of all men; they proclaim those eternal and inviolable laws which are the basis of public and private order, and which form at once the good Christian and the good citizen. Ceaselessly and in ways most diverse and most efficacious for impressing the human heart, they cry to all: "This is the command of God—fly evil, do good; hate vice, love virtue; harm no man either in his property, person, or good name; love all, even your enemies, and assist those in need; be chaste not only in body, but in thought; abhor all uncleanness and lying; let your speech be aye, aye, nay, nay. Be humble, patient, just, resolute

in keeping your passions under subjection, and kind in bearing with the faults of others. Prefer to obey rather than to rule; treat those subject to you as sons and brothers; respect those who rule you as you would a father, aye, as you would God Himself, mindful that you must render Him an account of every action, aye, of every thought, and that some day from Him you will receive a fitting reward."

Now, my friends, whatever be your beliefs and convictions, put your hands upon your hearts and tell me, if such a body of men as the priesthood, who preach continuously and in every conceivable way to all classes and in God's name these grand simple, theoretical, and practical truths, and endeavor to impress them on their hearts and to make them popular, must not exert a powerful influence for good? Will not their labors be beneficial to society? Will they not be a powerful aid in having the laws observed and in facilitating the duties of the civil power? How many victims will be rescued from vice! How many souls gone astray will be put again upon the path of virtue! How many crimes will be prevented!

But the work of the Church through her priesthood is not restricted to that of being the perennial, authoritative, and universal preacher of the truths from which spring all private and public virtues, or the implacable opponent of all vices in

high and low; it engages in every form of active beneficence. You will find the hand of the Church everywhere, in hospitals, in orphanages, and in asylums of all kinds, and to her they owe their origin and growth. She opens schools, founds colleges, instructs the children of the people, gathers up the abandoned, and under her auspices charitable institutions of every kind are erected and opened to all. If you run through the lists of the foundations of benevolent institutions, especially those of ancient date and that endure full of life to the present day, you will find that they owe their origin and growth to the Church, and that she subsidized them munificently. Should all the creations of the Church disappear from the world to-day and her works of public and private benevolence cease, what would become of society? What a void? What desolation? Society would look round upon itself with horror and would feel its life fast ebbing away.

This power of the Church, which knows how to reach the intellects and hearts of men, this moral power, strong with a divine strength, which never grows old, which is ever assailed and is ever becoming stronger, loyally offers its aid to the civil power; it has never been, is not now, and never can be its enemy. There have been moments when men in power have thought differently, but they should confess that they were in error. Away,

then, with all suspicion and dread that we churchmen can be enemies of our native country, or that we can view with other than feelings of pleasure and pride her greatness and prosperity; we should be miscreants could we feel otherwise; we should violate the laws of nature and outrage the Gospel we preach. We wish well to our country, are proud of its material progress and prosperity, of its independence and glory, but more than all we wish well to its moral well-being, which draws its strength and life from religion. What would our country be, rich and powerful as it is, without morality and religion? I dare not say. We gladly extend our hand to men in power and ask them to extend their hand to us, that we may both work together for the material and temporal, the moral and eternal welfare of our common country. Let them labor for the body with a view to promoting the well-being of the soul, and we shall work for the soul, and the body will experience the great benefit of our labors. And what recompense do we ask? Only that the State will not refuse us its aid where it can give it without doing a shadow of violence to its conscience. Does this seem too much? Then we ask that at least the State will not embarrass us in our work, that it will leave us a real, true, and stable liberty to do good, that is, to preach the truth, to combat error, to smite vice, and to establish the kingdom of virtue. Let

statesmen not imitate Herod, who turned his power against Jesus Christ, received his punishment and earned an everlasting infamy; but let them imitate the Magi, who went to Christ, offered Him their tribute of faith and love and returned to their homes enriched with the treasures of truth.

DISCOURSE V

The Three Ways that Lead to Truth
The Use the Magi Made of Them

THE great mysteries of our religion, and especially those that refer to the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, are mines whence with trifling labor we may find the purest ore of the most beautiful and sublime truths. On this most auspicious day the Church joyfully celebrates the event related in the Gospel of how the Magi, or wise men, or it may be princes, setting out from the far East arrived in Jerusalem, and going thence on to Bethlehem found the divine babe, adored Him, and offered Him their mystical gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Here we see on the one hand the great goodness of God, who by means of a star, or sign in the heavens, whatever it was, calls the first Gentiles to the Faith; and on the other the docility, alacrity, and generosity of soul with which these wise men obey the voice of God. In these wise men, the first-fruits of the Gentiles, we should admire the way in which Providence leads men on to a knowledge of truth. Anticipated and moved by grace, without which man can do nothing, they made use of their reason and, comparing the event with their

ancient tradition, they concluded that the expected Messias was born.

But reason alone, even aided by their tradition, could not tell them where the Messias was. The star, or the sign in the heavens, appeared and guided them on their way and the Magi cheerfully followed it. When they had arrived at Jerusalem the star was either clouded or had wholly disappeared and they knew not where to look for it. But for all that these wonderful men did not abandon their undertaking or lose heart; they humbly sought information from him, who, they believed, could give it to them. They said to Herod: "Where is He who is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East. This star has conducted us this far, will you now finish the work? Will you, who certainly must know, tell us where is the Saviour?" Herod was a king, but not a priest; he either did not know or did not dare reply. He assembled the Great Council of the Jews, the chief priests, and asked them the question the Magi had put to him: "Where is Christ to be born?" The priests promptly and clearly replied, thus explaining the sign and interpreting Sacred Writ, "In Bethlehem." Citizens and courtiers, Herod and the Magi, all acquiesce in the answer of the priesthood; in Bethlehem the Son of God, made man, must be sought; there the Magi seek Him and find Him, and in

finding Him and by means of Him they found life.

This fact, recorded in the Gospel, is a condemnation of the gravest errors into which millions of our fellow men still fall, and it points out to us the royal way that leads to truth. This is what I propose to show in this Discourse and the subject is worthy your closest attention.

Man is made for truth. Streams come rushing down the mountain sides, dashing over the rocks and through the ravines that impede their course, then they traverse vast plains and after a long journey finally settle down quietly in the sea; stars move silently about the sun, whence they receive motion and light; and so also do men seek truth, always and everywhere, and, once they have found it, rest in it; if they fail to find it, or if others harass them in the pursuit of it, or if obstacles arise that prevent them gaining possession of it, they are disturbed and agitated and give themselves no peace until they have laid hold of it and made it their own. Have you ever heard a single man say: "I do not seek truth"? Impossible. If he is one who has gone astray, is wayward and obstinate, he may seek error, may desire it, preach it, become its apostle and even up to a certain point, its martyr, but he will always protest that he seeks, loves, and preaches the truth. Nature, still more potent than his perver-

sity, forces him to be false to himself and to call that truth which he knows to be a lie. Such is the force of nature.

But if man has an innate tendency to seek truth, of whatever kind it may be, he has a still stronger tendency to seek and gain a knowledge of those truths that are of personal interest to him, that must be the rule of his belief and conduct, and with which is bound up his destiny here and hereafter. Such are unquestionably the fundamental truths: morality and religion, the existence of God, the creation, the origin of man, the immortality of the soul, a future life, the lot reserved for the good and the wicked, and the like. As regards the truths of the natural order and those that constitute the basis of religion, where is the man that can be indifferent to them? "As for myself," Pascal has well said, "it does not much concern me whether or not the system of Ptolemy is true or false, but it very much concerns me to know if there is a God, if man has a soul, and if that soul is immortal."

Now in what way or by what means may man arrive at a knowledge of God and His perfections, of his own origin and end, and of the duties he must discharge toward God, himself, and his fellow-man?

I can see only three ways of reaching such knowledge: first, by reason, which every man pos-

sesses; next, by the study of a Book given by God to all men, which teaches the truths necessary for men to know; and thirdly, by the teaching of a body of men, whom God has appointed and commissioned to instruct all men in these truths. These three ways are reason alone, the Bible, which each must read for himself, and the living and infallible authority of the Church. The rationalists follow the first way, the Protestants the second, and we Catholics the third. Let us examine each dispassionately by the light of reason alone.

The rationalists of old, and especially the modern rationalists, boast that man can by reason alone know God, his own end, and all that is necessary and sufficient to live an honest life; and that there is no need either of a higher teacher or of a revelation.

We Catholics are certainly not the men who will make light of the powers of human reason or who will too narrowly restrict its boundaries. We know and we cheerfully recognize its triumphs in every branch of the knowable; we applaud its discoveries, its marvelous progress, and its incredible advances in the sciences of astronomy, physics, mathematics, and mechanics, and we rejoice that you are its enthusiastic cultivators, and from our hearts we say, "Onward and onward and still onward!" But will you now honestly tell us what

your reason has accomplished, or what it can accomplish, in that which especially concerns and supremely interests each one of us? What has it told of God, of the soul, of the life to come, and of the rule of moral conduct? Is it of itself sufficient for man, and can it lead him on to a certain and efficacious knowledge of those truths, wanting which a man is not a man, but an enigma, a manifest contradiction? Without a moment's hesitancy, I reply no, and in demonstrating this I yield the post of honor to St. Thomas. Listen reverently to him.[1]

Let us cast a glance upon the society in which we live. As regards intellectual capacity what do we find? An endless gradation. Very many have only a limited intelligence, but gifted with strength of body they plow the fields, perspire in shops, handle the plane, the hammer, and the saw, and carry hods and beams on their stout shoulders. Call them to you, try to reason with them on things that they can neither see nor touch, on God and His nature, on the soul, on law and virtue, on their relations to God, to themselves, and

[1]When with St. Thomas we affirm that human reason individually and collectively is impotent to know the truths of the *natural order* necessary for every man, we mean always to speak of its *moral*, not its *absolute*, impotence, as the Vatican Council declares, since it is certain that reason alone can and ought to have *sufficient* knowledge of these truths; but in matter of *fact* and *practically* it has not this knowledge; it is a power or potency that does not pass into act except in the case of a few gifted intelligences; but here there is question of truths *necessary* to all and to each man individually.

to their fellow men; they will believe what you say, they will admit all you affirm, but as for comprehending these things, they are utterly incapable. How can this multitude of men, and they include at least one-fourth of the human race, abandoned to themselves, rise to a conception of these great truths that constitute the basis of all religion and of all morality? How can these men, engaged in the fatiguing labors of this life, find time to study, to pore over books, and to make their way through subtile discussions in which even the most acute of intellects often go astray? If men who have been long, patiently, and laboriously taught are unable to penetrate these truths, how could they ever be able to comprehend them, if they are left to themselves? Any one who has any intelligence at all knows that the majority have not the mental acumen necessary to rise to the contemplation of these truths and to know them so perfectly that they can make them their rule of conduct and apply them to themselves in particular cases.[1]

The great Doctor goes on, and he has no equal in the study of human nature: "If," he says, "we survey men as they come before us one by one we shall find that many of them are not wanting in ready talents and an aptitude for profound speculation on abstract subjects, but the ordinary exigencies of life forbid them giving themselves to

[1]St. Thomas, *Contra Gent.* c. iv.

such studies." There are the cares of a family, business, industries, daily occupations, and a thousand other affairs, which they can not and do not care to give up or neglect; and there is the social whirl, which, whether they will or not, ceaselessly carries them along with it and does not leave them the time or quietude necessary to occupy themselves with those truths on which the rule of thought and action of every man must depend. The din and bustle of worldly affairs are incessantly assailing their ears and they walk through life like men stupefied and delirious, ignorant whence they came or whither they are going, and intent only on enjoying themselves or in gaining the means to do so, until finally they find themselves at the end of life, scarcely knowing what they have accomplished and oblivious of the unknown into which they are about to enter. To fancy that such men will withdraw from the world, forsake the busy tumult in which they move, and in which they find a rapturous joy, and retire into some quiet spot there to give themselves up to the study of high moral and religious problems, demanding a quick and decisive solution, is indeed the strangest of delusions; and any one who knows anything of human nature and of what is going on constantly about us in the world, will, I think, agree with me.

"Nor is this all," says St. Thomas; "man is also

subject to the sway, I had almost said, to the sovereignty of the senses." And the reason is clear. The life of the senses anticipates by many years the development of the reason and the reason can not act without them; hence the predominance of the senses over the reason and the repugnance of most men to meditate upon supersensible and abstract things, to think out principles and to roam through the fields of pure truth. Now, God and the soul, duty and justice, virtue and vice, good and evil, are subjects that transcend the senses, subjects that are not seen or touched and that elude any sort of experiment, and hence the human mind experiences a repugnance in considering them; it becomes tired and disgusted and, like a bird that has been for some time fluttering about through the air and falls to the ground and rests there, it turns to the world of sense; there it finds its delight and there it abides. You will find that the multitudes never weary of diversions, of shows and balls, of music and singing, of feasts and receptions, and not even of material labor; and if they grow tired of one, they pass to another and find a sort of relaxation in doing so; but very rarely, if ever, will you find a man who will go off by himself, put his head between his hands and sincerely ask himself: "Whence do I come? Whither am I going? What must I do to fulfil my duties? Who is God?

What is virtue? What is vice? What will be my eternal lot?" And note that if very few men do this even now, when the voice of the Teacher appointed by God, or the Church, is continually heard in our midst, what would happen should we be abandoned to our own powers? Who would lift his eyes from earth to heaven and endeavor to read there his destiny? I leave you to answer.

But let us grant that some few great intellects, richly gifted by nature and free from the cares of earth, are able to give themselves to the study of these truths and to acquire a knowledge of them. Do you think it possible for them to gain such knowledge in a short time? Any one who has merely an indifferent acquaintance with the very great difficulties attending upon such study will not say so. Many, many years must go by before they will have acquired a clear and intimate knowledge of these truths. And during these long years, while the mind is oscillating between yes and no, between the true and the false, how are they to regulate their conduct? They will necessarily be in doubt and uncertainty, like a ship at sea with neither star nor compass to guide its course. As soon as man has arrived at the age of reason and has a consciousness of his responsibility, he must also know what path he is to tread, what duties he has to discharge, the good he has to do and the evil he has to avoid; the na-

ture of a rational and moral being demands this; but this is wholly impossible even to the most gifted intellects and the most upright wills, if the acquiring of these necessary truths is to be the work of our individual efforts.

Moreover, every one who knows the weakness of our mind and instability of our will will readily understand that very grave doubts frequently arise and trouble the most upright soul. Truths that concern God, the soul, the moral order, and others of the same kind are not like truths acquired through the senses; they are not like mathematical truths of which it is not possible to doubt; no one can doubt of the existence of the earth, or of mountains, rivers, and cities that he has seen; no one can doubt that two parallel lines will never meet, or that five and five make ten. But it is quite different when there is question of the moral and religious order; here doubt very frequently springs up side by side with truth, especially in certain seasons of trial, when the most violent passions are in conflict with the truths that condemn them. What in such seasons will become of a man who, in order to hold fast to truth, must declare fierce war on his passions? We willingly and gladly rid ourselves of a troublesome master, to whom we have given ourselves, and these truths are such a master. What more natural than that our doubts should grow stronger and more impor-

tunate and that they should gain the upper hand and end by clouding those truths, which have become so troublesome to us that we almost look upon them as enemies? Such is a man without a safe guide and left wholly to himself.

Finally, says St. Thomas, it is next to a miracle for a man not to mingle some error with truths that he has acquired by long and continuous effort; thus together with truth, which is the food of life, he will also have the poison of error, which is the source of death; darkness will be mingled with light, vice with virtue, and the path to salvation will be closed. If men of such stupendous intellects as Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Marcus Aurelius, after having grown gray meditating on these great truths, fell into many and grave errors, what will happen in the case of the ordinary run of men?

Should there still remain any doubt of the moral impotency of human reason in regard to the truths that are indispensable to all men, it will vanish when confronted with the irrefragable proof of the facts of history, both ancient and modern.

The greatest thinkers of Greek and Roman antiquity have left us the fruits of their studies and of their profound investigations. If we go through these works, which both for form and substance have gained the admiration of the world; if we

search all the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus, of Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca, we shall not find a summary of the truths most essential to all men, and especially to the common people, in order to live virtuously; we shall indeed find some truths scattered here and there in their pages, always elegantly expressed, but mixed with errors, and always shrouded in doubt. They express only their own opinions, and what little they teach of what is good and true they propose as ascertained by themselves and set before us, not as a duty, but as a counsel. There is no superior authority making it obligatory on all, and binding always and uniformly; there is no certain and definite sanction, whether for those who practise virtue or for those who give themselves up to a religious life. And it should not be forgotten that some echo of the ancient traditions and of the teachings of Moses must in some way have reached those great minds. And if these eminently wise men went so miserably astray and were unable to build up an edifice of truth, such as is most ordinary and most necessary to all, what must have been the state of those left to the sole resources of their reason, and what would be the state of our poor people under like conditions?

Again, consider for a moment the learned men of our own century, to whom it would be unjust

to deny that they are talented and studious, and who, morever, live in the light of Christian truth. How many doubt, or even openly deny, the primary truths concerning God, the moral law, and a future life! Rationalists, both ancient and modern, have toiled for centuries and are still toiling under our eyes, and men, in every way exceptional and possessing every means that can be desired, are engaged in the task, and yet they have not succeeded in building up anything; on the contrary, they have only succeeded in pulling down what faith had built up. Rationalism has killed itself, and then to expect that reason alone will supply a torch that will light our path in this life and lead us on to the next, is to expect that fireflies will produce the light of day and that the moon will warm the earth and cover it with flowers and harvests.

Had the Magi depended on reason alone they never would have set out from the Orient and never would have succeeded in knowing Christ. They set out from the East and journeyed on toward Him when the mysterious star, the symbol of faith and of the word of God, shone out in the heavens; their reason, illuminated by that superhuman light, was stirred, their will felt itself drawn to Him, and they made their first advance toward Him.

And next after the rationalists come our breth-

ren, the Protestants, who say: "We have the star that infallibly leads us on to Christ; it is the word of God as it is set down in Holy Writ; it ever shines brilliantly with its own light and never suffers an eclipse; all can and should see it, all can and should walk in its light. The Bible, the Bible alone, is enough for all; as the Magi, following the star, came to a knowledge of the truth, so do we, following the Bible." Let us examine this claim.

In order that the Bible may be an unerring star and sufficient to guide our friends the Protestants on to Christ, they must know with absolute certainty and without the shadow of a doubt that this Book is wholly and in all its parts given by God Himself. If there is the least doubt in regard to this the foundation of their faith is shaken. Now who informs them that this book comes wholly from God and from God alone? Does the book itself? In that case they must believe that the Koran and many other books come from God, for they make that claim. Hence they must have recourse to the authority of other records and of men who can assure them that the Bible is a book that comes from God Himself, and if so, the Bible is not adequate testimony, and they must admit another authority equal to the Bible, outside of the Bible, and a guarantee for the Bible itself, and then their doctrine, that the Bible alone is sufficient, is left without a foundation.

Again: If the Bible alone is sufficient, all must read it and meditate on its truths. But then what of those millions who know not how to read? Let them, it is said, go to those who can read and understand the Bible. Then again they must trust to men, and if these are in error, they will err with them.

The Bible alone! Very well. But the Bible was written partly in Hebrew, partly in Chaldaic, partly in Aramaic, and partly in Greek. If, then, I do not know these languages, neither shall I know the truths contained in the Bible. There are translations, it will be said. Certainly, but if the translators were themselves deceived or wished to deceive me, what then? Were they infallible or impeccable? No. Hence when I am in doubt whether in these versions the truth may or may not have changed, either through ignorance or malice, my faith wavers.

Again: This book goes back, parts of it, nineteen, other parts of it twenty-five, and still others forty centuries; copies of it without number have been made and they have passed through countless hands; hence might they not by some mischance and in some way have been substantially altered? Who can give a guarantee that they were not? And if there is a doubt on this point, what becomes of the faith of Protestants, which rests wholly and solely on this book?

But let us grant that all these insuperable difficulties have in fact been overcome. Our Protestant brethren read the whole Bible attentively, and they must know that there is not a book in the world as difficult to understand as this, whether because of the language in which it is written, or of the style of ancient and Oriental writers, or of the supernatural truths it contains, or of the numerous and contradictory interpretations put upon passages of it by heretics. How can the things to be believed in this book be distinguished from those that are not to be believed? How separate what is of obligation from what is of counsel? The parts abrogated by Christ from those retained and sanctioned? In doubt, what rule is to be followed? When learned men themselves can not agree, to what tribunal is recourse to be had for light? How can any man by reading the Bible, containing thirty-four thousand verses, ascertain with certainty what he must believe and do and omit in order to be saved? You all understand perfectly well that it is not only difficult but impossible for every man to go through this immense labor, and hence that it is impossible for the Bible, interpreted by each one according to his own fancy, to be a guiding star that will easily lead all men to Christ and to the sure and certain knowledge of the saving truths taught by Him.

It only remains, then, for our Protestant brethren to agree with us Catholics, who, as well as they, venerate the Bible and accept it as a divine book containing the bulk of revealed truth, but not all; it only remains for them to receive, as we do, this book from the hands of the Church, which existed before it, which received it from the apostles and from Christ Himself; it only remains, finally, for them to receive, as we do, the explanations of it from the Church, which was by Jesus Christ constituted its natural and infallible interpreter. Every society without exception has its code, but the authentic interpretation of it is not left to the individual citizen; this is reserved to the legitimate tribunals. So also we Catholics have in the Bible a code given us by God, and in the supreme tribunal of the Church we have its authoritative interpreter. Could anything be more simple or natural?

We Catholics follow the example of the Magi. They followed the star as far as Jerusalem, but by it alone they would not have found the Saviour. There was the Priesthood. When asked by Herod, they explained the significance of the star and pointed out the place where Jesus was to be born, thus giving a certain interpretation of the prophecy of Micheas. The teachings of the Church, or of the priesthood under the guidance of the Supreme Head, the Roman Pontiff, is for

us all a speedy and safe means of understanding the Bible and of knowing all that we must believe and do; this is a means within the reach of all; it dissipates all doubts and makes all believers equal before the Teacher, who holds the place of God.

We then, my brethren, while thanking God for the light of reason, which comes from Him and by which we are men made in His image, shall hold as most certain the dogma that it is not sufficient to enable us to know the truths of the natural order, and much less those of the supernatural. And we hold as necessary a divine revelation, or faith, which like the star of the Magi shines upon us from on high. Moreover, while ever thanking God for having given us the Sacred Books as a light to enlighten us, we shall hold as of faith that these are not sufficient for our needs; that we must receive them from the hands of the Church and with them receive from the Church herself the interpretation of them. And this is the path to truth.

DISCOURSE VI

External Worship

EVERY fact and every phase of the Gospel story, though it may be brief and seemingly unimportant, is always prolific of highest and most useful lessons for any one who considers it in the clear light of indubitable faith. This being so, what lessons does the Gospel fact teach, which the Church joyfully celebrates and calls to our minds to-day, a fact which St. Matthew minutely relates in the very first pages of his Gospel and which adumbrates that other marvelous fact, that fills the world and of which we ourselves are witnesses, namely, the conversion of the Gentiles? In to-day's mystery we may consider the persons connected with it—Herod, the Magi or wise men, the priests, the courtiers of Herod, Joseph, the Blessed Virgin, and the Babe of Heaven; or we may fix our thoughts upon what some of them are saying, or upon what all are doing, and in each and all find useful subjects for a discourse, but it will be better to limit what we have to say to the Magi, who are leading characters in the mystery we are celebrating. They obey the voice of Heaven, which is made articulate to them in the

heavenly sign and stirs an echo in their hearts; they care nothing for what men may say; they fear not the hardships and dangers of a long journey; when undecided as to their route, they do not hesitate to ask information of those who can give it; they follow with docility the light of Heaven and the directions of the priesthood, and their faith and perseverance are finally crowned with success, for they find the Son of God made man. And having found Him what do they do? *Falling down they adore Him.* Nor is this all; they present Him gifts worthy themselves and the Saviour: *They offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* In the Magi we have an example of a perfect homage of mind and heart, and the external manifestation of this homage is seen in the fact that they prostrated themselves and offered symbolic gifts. Here, then, we have the interior and exterior worship due to God.

Since in these days it is not rare to hear even educated men talking nonsense about the external worship prescribed and practised by the Church and condemning it, either wholly or in part, it may be worth while and possibly necessary to say something on this subject; and that we may proceed orderly let us, first, briefly determine what is meant by external worship; and, next, we shall show that it is natural, useful, and necessary; and, finally, we shall endeavor to solve some of the dif-

ficulties most commonly urged against it. The subject is one of very great importance.

Now, what is external worship? It is a frank and faithful manifestation of internal worship; it is an echo of the soul that stirs and quickens the body; it is a pouring out in words and acts, and in forms the most various, of the thoughts, feelings, and affections, the admiration and gratitude, the veneration and adoration of mind and heart, thus bringing them within the dominion of the senses. External worship includes also temples and all that temples contain—altar furniture, images, statues, and ornaments of every kind; it includes whatever is done either within them or outside them for the honor of God, of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints—gatherings of the faithful, functions, ceremonies, music, singing, prayers, genuflections, prostrations, processions, and so on.

Now I affirm that this external worship as understood, prescribed, or permitted by the Church is natural, a necessity of our nature, and in every sense most useful; and now for the proof of this statement. Should I say to any man: "Are you a pure spirit?" He would answer, "No, I am spirit and body; I think and will, remember and love; I reason, judge, and choose; such are the acts that are proper to that which within me is spirit and which eludes the senses. I feel, I see with my eyes, hear with my ears, and touch with

my hand. I eat, drink, sleep, grow old, and die; such are the acts of that which in me is body and which is subject to the senses. I am one sole individual, one sole *I,* of this I have a certain and indestructible consciousness; at the same time I am equally conscious and certain that I have a soul that is not the body, and a body that is not the soul." Admirable! Now tell me: "Is this soul, is this body which you have, this *I,* which is your whole being, the work of your hands? Are you the son of yourself? Are you the artificer, the preserver of yourself?" You answer, "No; I have not created my soul, nor have I formed my body; I am the work of the Creator, of God; to Him I am indebted for all that I am in body and soul, for all that I have or shall have." This truth is absolutely clear. If, then, such is the fact, and of this there can be no doubt, your entire being ought to render tribute to God; you ought to honor Him both by soul and body, since both are His gift, ever and always His gift; with the soul you give to God interior worship, the worship of faith, hope, and love; with the body you give Him the external worship of visible and material acts. Had you received from God only a soul, then very properly your worship would be only interior and spiritual, but since together with the soul you have received also a body, it necessarily follows that to interior worship you must join exterior,

and the two worships, since you are but one, unite in you, are woven together, coalesce, and are ever inseparable.

There is no one who, admitting God and revelation, will not also admit the duty of interior worship; just as, admitting that we have a father, we must also admit that we are bound to him by the ties of duty. So also, admitting interior worship, the necessity of exterior worship follows as a natural consequence. When your soul is flooded with gladness or harrowed by grief, when it is under the influence of strong feelings of love or hatred, of gratitude or anger, what do you do? You involuntarily manifest them; they are visible in your eyes and countenance, they are audible in your words, your tears and gestures reveal them. "*Who,*" says Job, "*can withhold the words he has conceived?*" Children rush into the arms of father or mother, who take them to their hearts and cover them with kisses. Friend meets friend, takes him by the hand, and by word and look shows his affection for him. What is the meaning of all this, my friends? It is nature teaching us that the internal acts of the soul can not be severed from their external manifestation, and that the worship of the spirit carries with it the worship of the body. To wish to separate internal worship from external, is to wish to separate soul from body, thought from words, a living tree from

its foliage; it is to wish to have harmony without the instrument that enables us to enjoy it; it is to wish to have lightning without thunder, a cause without an effect, a soul without a body. What God has bound together by the closest of ties man should not dare to rend asunder, and God has ordained that soul and body shall be so united, and hence He has ordained that there shall be a union between interior and exterior worship.

The Apostle says that we believe and gain grace with the heart, but that by word of mouth we openly profess the faith and complete the work of salvation: *"With the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* These words seem a commentary or repetition of the solemn utterance of Our Lord: "Every one that shall confess Me before man, I will confess him before My Father who is in heaven; but he that shall deny Me before man I will also deny him before My Father who is in Heaven."[1] Now what do these words of Jesus Christ mean except that we must join exterior to interior worship, if we would be His disciples, and that interior worship of itself does not suffice? Why did the millions of martyrs, who are the glory of the Church and are now about the throne of Christ in heaven, shed their blood, and

[1]Matt. x. 32-33.

how did they gain the palms they carry in their right hand? All their persecutors asked was that they should pronounce a single word against the faith they cherished in their hearts; that they should drop a single grain of incense on a brazier of live coals to show outwardly their apostasy from Christ, although inwardly they might still cling tenaciously to the Faith. Had they done this there would have been an end of tortures of every kind, of fire and sword and wild beasts and of the most atrocious of deaths. All that was required was that the Christians should separate external from internal worship; their persecutors cared nothing for the latter; they demanded only that their victims should give an external compliance, and with this they would have been satisfied. Who will say, then, that external worship has no value and that God looks to the heart alone and that with this He is content?

Nor is this all, my brethren. Follow me attentively. Look at the tree; if it is not living it will not grow, nor will it put forth flower and produce fruit. So also the human body; if it is soulless it is simply a corpse, immobile, inert, and incapable of anything. How do both the tree and the human body, if living, preserve their life, develop, and grow? Vegetable, animal, and human life is preserved, grows, and is developed by the food received in season from air and light, from

moisture and soil. This law is universal, absolute, immutable, and without exception. Nourishment from without is necessary to the development of any living germ, to the preservation and perfection of all life. So also with spiritual life; Christian faith requires the nourishment that is proper to it, and the nourishment consists mainly, in the case of all, but especially of the plain people, in external worship: Churches and altars, crucifixes, statues, and images, prayers, religious canticles, and organs, rites, furniture, and sacred vestments, in a word everything that goes to make up that assemblage of objects and actions that constitute worship, and which, while they are a manifestation of faith and piety, are also their food and nourishment. Take oil from a lamp and combustible matter from fire and you will extinguish both; suppress external worship and you will crush out faith and the religious sentiments that depend upon it for life and increase. Jesus Christ has ordained that faith and grace shall be communicated in His Church as in a large family and a great society; there is a supreme head; there are inferior officers, and there are the simple faithful; all heavenly gifts are communicated from one to the other, as among the members of the same family and society; they are communicated continuously by means of actions and signs and external agencies, by preaching, prayer, and

the sacraments, which are the chief elements of external worship. Since, then, the Church of Jesus Christ is constituted after the manner of a society, and since her members are visible, they must necessarily be known to one another, bound together as one body, and the good common to all must be shared by each; and hence they must have visible signs to distinguish them, to show that they are children of the same family and members of the same society. An army has its flag about which the soldiers rally; it has its countersign, uniform, arms, its words of command, its salutes, and a hundred other things peculiar to itself by which it is known and distinguished and which constitute it one sole body, give it, as it were, a single soul, and make it one individual. The several units disappear and there remains but one sole being, and the strength of the several parts is wholly absorbed into one marvelous unity. And this is precisely what takes place in the Church by virtue of the manifold bond of external worship.

Enter a church; it is filled with people; I see them rise, I see them join their hands together, I see them kneel and bow their heads and adore the sacred Host that the priest at the altar lifts on high; I hear thousands of voices, all mingling as one, intoning *Te Deum laudamus—Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto—Tantum ergo Sacramen-*

tum, Veneremur cernui. The faith of each one is stirred and kindled, swells and breaks forth in words, and every one of the great multitude feels his own faith increasing and he feels, too, that he is capable of generous and heroic deeds. Isolated, these men, each shut up in the sanctuary of his own conscience, might indeed feel that they believe in God, hope in Him, and love Him, but their faith, hope, and love would be isolated, weak, possibly cold and unequal to great achievements. But let these sentiments go forth simultaneously from the hearts of all and show themselves in one solemn manifestation, and a transformation will take place, a vast fire will be kindled, and every one will suddenly feel that he is wrapped in its flames; it will be as if an electric spark had passed instantaneously from one to another, pervading all, mysteriously agitating all, transforming all, and carrying all with it in its resistless course. These are solemn moments in the life of men, moments of omnipotent enthusiasm, of heroic virtue, of the most sublime sacrifices. But just as the electric spark requires for its transmission and communication a wire along which to travel, so do faith, hope, and love, and the Christian life require external signs and the spectacles of external worship to manifest themselves, to expand, and envelop multitudes in their light and sacred flame. Which of you has ever witnessed one of

these spectacles, so common in the Catholic Church, and will not say I am right?

A celebrated unbeliever, Lord Bolingbroke, whose disciple Voltaire was, once accompanied Louis XIV to a solemn Mass, and when at the moment of consecration he saw that magnificent court rise and bow profoundly, he was so moved that unconsciously he also rose and bowed. It is related of Rousseau, who wrote pages of fire against external worship and prayer, which he regarded an insult to reason, that, on going disguised into Catholic churches, seeing the people silent and reverent, and while contemplating the sacred rites, he was so touched and moved that he began himself to sob and pray. Such is the power of external worship!

And so true is it that external worship is naturally allied with and inseparable from religion that you find it in all ages and in every clime under heaven. These external manifestations may be different in form and at times opposite one to the other, but at bottom they are all the same. The Hebrews and the Mussulmans, the Buddhist and the Brahmin, the followers of Fu and Confucius, Pagans ancient and modern, the Copts and Nestorians, the Greek-Photians and the Russians, Catholics and Protestants, have all temples and altars, reunions and public prayers, ceremonies and sacred functions, corresponding to

their several beliefs and to the character of place, time, and circumstances. And as you can not find an atheistic people, so you can not find a people without a religion, and in consequence without an external worship. And the greater and more elevated the idea of the Divinity among any people, the more living and powerful will be the religious sentiment and the more splendid, pure, and significant its worship. Any one who recognizes God, His greatness, and His benefits, who fears Him and loves Him, necessarily feels the need of raising mind and heart to Him, of blessing, thanking, and exalting Him in every possible way; and without being conscious of it he will sing His praises, lift up his hands to Him, bow his head, fall on his knees, prostrate himself, cover His altars with flowers, burn incense and build temples in His honor, and endeavor to perpetuate forever in marble and bronze his feelings of admiration and gratitude.

Admire those Magi, our fathers in the Faith. On arriving at the poor little cottage in Bethlehem they dismount from their camels and dromedaries, reverently uncover their heads, fall on their knees before the new-born Saviour of the world and with their foreheads in the dust adore Him—"*And falling down they adored Him.*" Nor does this satisfy them; they must show by sensible gifts their internal feelings for the heavenly Babe, and

so they offer Him gold as their God, incense as the Man-God, and myrrh. If there is any one now listening to me to whom external worship is displeasing, I would ask him: Had you been at Bethlehem and seen with your eyes the Saviour of the world there on a bed of straw, what would you have done? You would have unconsciously fallen on your knees, bowed your forehead, and adored Him; that is, you would have performed all the acts of external worship that faith had inspired in you and imposed upon you. In the presence of some great personage, of some famous and wise man, of a monarch, you feel it your duty to show your homage to him in repeated and unmistakable words and actions, and will you refuse to do as much for great saints, for the incomparable Virgin, and for the omnipotent God? It would be a manifest contradiction. Let us conclude, then, that external worship is natural, necessary, and useful to man, and that those who would abolish it know not our nature and would put asunder two things that can not be parted and never will be.

And now let us listen to some of the difficulties most commonly urged against external worship, and answer them, and this I do all the more willingly, since the replies that I shall give will more clearly illustrate and drive home what has already been said.

It is objected: God has no need of all this external pomp and parade. What good are these temples, these altars gleaming with gold and silver? Behold the earth and the heavens, and all their sublime display of grandeur; these are a temple worthy of God! What does He care for this heap of rites and ceremonies and external actions, which are so burdensome to us?

Now, my friends, who does not know this? God does not need the pomp of our worship; it is of no benefit to Him, who is the master and owner of all things. A child five years of age knows this. We are the ones who must needs manifest our faith and our gratitude and the feelings of which our hearts are so full; it is beneficial to us to display the greatest possible pomp and parade in our external worship, because all this quickens our faith, revives our hope, dilates the flames of our love, lifts us up to God, unites one to another, and edifies all.

God has no need of external worship! What good to Him are all the pomp of our ceremonies! Let me ask you: Has He any need of your internal worship? In what does your faith, your love, your mortifications, and the homage of your mind, benefit Him? Come, tell me. On the same principle you should refuse internal worship to God. Away, then, with faith, and love, and gratitude, for of all these God has no need; these do not

benefit Him in the least; let us live as if there were no God; as if He had not created us, preserved us, benefited and redeemed us. Soldiers, what need have your officials and generals of your salutes? Subjects, what need have your rulers of your homage? Children, of what benefit to your parents are your tokens of respect, your love, the kisses that you imprint upon their foreheads? All these things are useless. Abolish them all! What do you say to this? If all this were abolished, nature, more potent than you, and in spite of your will the whole world, and you with it, would go on doing what has ever been done and what will ever continue to be done.

Yes, the earth with its rivers and its lakes, its mountains and its seas, with all its visions of beauty, heaven with its wonderful stars and the music of their harmony, are indeed a temple of God, and what a temple! So far well. And now you men who make laws and govern peoples, who administer justice and cultivate the fine arts, who teach the sciences and render homage to the great, leave your courts and halls, your palaces and royal dwellings, your universities, schools, and theaters, and come together under the immense vault of heaven, in the light of the sun, under the soft beams of the moon and the scintillating stars, come out in view of the mountains and upon the

seashore, and there discuss, reason, teach, administer justice, and discharge all public functions and duties; the earth is vast enough, and the pavilion of the firmament is ample and magnificent enough to house us all worthily; there we will fulfil all the offices of sacred worship, and there you will perform all the varied parts of your civil, political, and judicial duties. Ah, you are stupefied and moved to laughter at the suggestion, and you profess that you have need of palaces and courts, of halls and schools, fitted up with everything necessary and serviceable for the work to be done there, and you are right. And we, also, have need of churches in which to come together and hear the teachings of faith, in which to pray, receive the sacraments, and celebrate our functions; we, too, have need of sacred furniture, of utensils, and of everything that will contribute to make divine worship worthy of God and of the people who honor Him. If you build sumptuous structures for men who discharge worldly offices, and decorate them superbly, should it surprise you that magnificent temples are built and richly and splendidly furnished for the use of men who discharge divine offices?

Again, it is objected, external worship is overdone; it smothers the internal. Too much attention is given to the senses to the detriment of the spirit; what should be only a means becomes as

important as the end and the people are misled and fall into superstition.

I am speaking only of worship as it is understood and in some way approved by the Church, and not of certain forms of it which may be at times excessive and for which the Church ought not to be held responsible. Worship is a language that expresses religious feeling, and like all language ought to be a reflex of the time and place and of the character of the people who employ it and see it, and of the degree of their religious culture and instruction. To claim that the forms of worship, even the parts of them that are only accessory, ought to be the same for all peoples, for the imaginative Neapolitan and Spaniard and for the staid Englishman and Dutchman, in the days of the apostles, in the Middle Ages, and in our own age, is to ignore the nature of things. I should not wish that cultivated and educated persons, who naturally love to get at the truth and are annoyed by external parade, would judge other people by themselves. In the case of the ordinary run of people, it is particularly necessary to appeal to the senses, to speak to them by symbols and signs and by striking spectacles in order to lift them up to a contemplation of holy and divine things; and with the plain people the Church has mainly to deal, since they constitute the great majority of her members and are

the most needy. It behooves the clergy to instruct these people and see to it that external worship shall be rightly understood, so that, instead of smothering, it will vivify internal worship, which ought to be the end and soul of external.

Moreover, those rigid and often passionate censors of the forms of external worship should not forget that the abuse of a thing walks side by side with its legitimate use, that to define the limits of each is very difficult, and that, if they wish to abolish all things that men may abuse they would have to abolish together with them everything good, for there is nothing true, or beautiful, or useful, or necessary, or holy, which men may not, either from ignorance or malice, make a bad use of.

But, it is urged again, in the palmy days of the Church, in the first ages, there was an admirable simplicity. Why not go back to that blessed simplicity, to those holy and austere forms? How much the spirit of faith and solid piety would gain by so doing!

My friends, everything in its time and place. In those days of the Church's infancy, in those centuries when the blood of Christians was mercilessly shed and when the faithful were forced to seek a refuge in the catacombs, in forests, and in deserts, or within domestic walls, public worship was impossible. As you all know, that was

not a normal state of the Church. In the Church, as among individuals and societies, there is progress or development wherever this is possible, and this is especially true of external forms, which are changeable, like the foliage of trees and the dress of men. Poor and proscribed, the Church did dress and should dress as one poor and proscribed; but once she was free and wealthy, it was fitting that she should dress splendidly as became her changed condition.

And now let me ask: Would you men of the twentieth century, who are accustomed to travel in carriages along broad and well-kept highways, to rush over land and sea in luxurious railway cars and majestic steamers, and to lodge in sumptuous hotels, with all their conveniences and comforts, would you and could you who are accustomed to all the splendor of modern life and fashion, go back to the usages public and private of five centuries, aye, of fifty years ago? And yet you would thrust the Church back into those times in order to be able to cast in her teeth with some semblance of truth the old accusation that she does not keep up with the times and that she is fixed and immobile in the past! It is all very fine to say, let the Church return to the simplicity of ancient worship; she will gain in the esteem and reverence of the people by doing so; the spirit of faith and piety will be increased. These are all

empty phrases, flowers of rhetoric! How would these fine gentlemen and elegant ladies, who love and possess grand suites of rooms and richly furnished parlors, who have every luxury, music, and song to delight the ear, like to go into a small wooden church, poor, naked, comfortless, where all is squalor and misery, where no note of music, no sound of song is heard, where everything is depressing to mind and heart? Men must be taken as they are, and they judge of things according to appearances; if these make a strong impression on the senses and look magnificent they are appreciated and reverenced; but if they seem to be humble and despicable, no matter what their real worth may be, it will be difficult for men to hold them in high esteem. Men of exceptional ability and of elevated sentiments, who regard the substance of things rather than their appearance, may do so, but these are always the few, and even they find it difficult to free themselves from the influence of the senses. The great law, then, remains inviolable and applicable to all—that men rise from a contemplation of the beauty and excellence of sensible things to an appreciation of invisible things, and hence the magnificence of external worship is a most efficacious means of kindling a spirit of faith and piety, and, far from being a detriment to internal worship, promotes and elevates it.

I once had the joy of receiving an Israelite into the Church and of administering Baptism to him; he had traveled in the old world and in the new and was gifted with a keen intellect and a cultivated mind. I asked him how the thought of becoming a Catholic entered into his mind; he replied: "Many years ago I went on a feast-day into a cathedral (and he gave the name); the bishop was pontificating, and the sacred and majestic rite made a deep impression on me. On that day the idea of becoming a Catholic rose in my mind and to-day that wish is fulfilled." And now say that the pomp of Catholic worship is useless!

But the enemies of external worship are not yet content; they appeal to political economy. External worship, they say, costs enormous sums; many millions are being continually dropped into this whirlpool, and there they are buried forever, and, what is worse, they are unproductive.

Yes, and there are many other burdensome and almost intolerable outlays, which private individuals, civic bodies, counties, and states have to bear, and which very often benefit only a few, or certain classes of society, and let us say it frankly, which are spent in ostentatious luxury and in the vile and shameless gratification of the passions. Are not millions spent on theaters, feasts, spectacles, and shows of every description; and are not

these sums *unproductive,* or, and we can truly say it, at times productive of untold harm?

And do not forget that these outlays are imposed upon the people and force them to make great sacrifices, a burden which they bear unwillingly; whereas the contributions to defray the expenses of public worship are wholly voluntary. Those who want public worship do not burden any one by levying an involuntary tax upon them; and moreover, they are masters of their own money, and, if they will, may use it to promote sacred worship, and what has any one to say about it? They are free and have a right to do this if they will, and their right must be respected. The works in which they wish to spend their money are works that honor God, that promote the instruction and the moral and religious education of the people, and that of their very nature are for the public use in the strictest sense in which these words are popularly understood. Now let me ask you plain people a question: Would you be permitted to enter as and when you please into the mansions of the great and wealthy, into the palaces of kings and rulers, or even into certain other buildings, museums and libraries, say, that belong to the public? But you may come into the Church when and as often as you will; you may contemplate at your leisure its works of art, the beauty of its architecture and of its paintings and stat-

ues, and you may listen to and enjoy the notes of the organ and the voices of the singers. This is truly your house, the throne of God, your Father; hither, too, will come, as long as it stands, your children, your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren and all your fellow-citizens. It is but fitting, then, that you should desire to have this a beautiful, stately house, rich and worthy of you. There are two buildings that I should wish to see in every town and city sumptuous and magnificent, and these are the church and the hospital, the one the house of the people, where they assemble, the other the house of the poor. Let us hear no more talk, then, of the money that is spent in building churches and in promoting divine worship being unproductive. Such language is unbecoming and dishonors him who uses it, and it is a disavowal of the purest and most lasting glories of our country. The cathedrals of Milan, Venice, Florence, Siena, and Orvieto, and the basilicas of Rome, particularly that of St. Peter's in the Vatican, the thousands of superb churches throughout the habitable globe, the marvels of brush, chisel, and graver, and of all the other sister arts, scattered over the face of the Catholic world, all those immortal creations of genius are due to external worship, which was and is the inspiration of them. Any one wishing to reduce public worship to its primitive proportions and simplicity must give up

all these glories, which have no equal and will never be surpassed. Only barbarians and savages could entertain such thoughts.

Again they say: The people should have work, it means bread to them.

Wonderful indeed! And our fathers and ourselves when we build these churches, and set up these altars, adorning them with marbles and paintings, laces, and furnishings, and when we celebrate feasts, what do we do? Do we not give employment, and the noblest of employments, to thousands of workmen? What more than we do can be asked?

And finally this objection is made: Would it not be better to convert those immense sums, that are so lavishly expended on external worship, into bread for the famishing and clothes for the naked and ragged, or to use them in building houses for the poor and refuges for all classes of the unfortunate?

You, who urge this difficulty and express this wish, should take notice that in reasoning in this way you will be led farther than you might care to go. If what is spent in worship for the common good, in embellishing and beautifying our country, in furnishing employment to those in need of it, should be expended in works of beneficence for the needy and suffering, why shall we not do the same with those fabulous sums that you rich

spend in palaces and villas, in equipages and horses, in banquets and diversions, in furniture and fashion, and all for your own personal and exclusive use? If you think yourselves free to use your wealth for purposes that are not always praiseworthy, or even becoming, why should you complain of those who think it a useful and holy thing to use their wealth in adorning the House of God, which is also the house of the public, in promoting sacred worship, and in elevating and educating what is most noble in man and for a purpose that will be most beneficial to civil society?

On the vigil of His death Christ praised Magdalen for a service she did Him in pouring precious balsam on His feet in anticipation of His burial; and to the disciple who said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor," He replied, "The poor you have always with you." To succor the poor is a holy work and pleasing to God, as the Gospel says in a hundred passages, but to honor God publicly by the varied manifestations of external worship is also a work not less pleasing to Him. We must, indeed, do the former, but we must not neglect the latter.

DISCOURSE VII

Religious Indifference

FACE to face with truth, which is equivalent to saying, face to face with Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the truth," there are only three parties possible. Either we reject the truth, make war on it and try to murder it, whether with sophisms or with the sword, it matters not; or we fall down at the feet of Jesus Christ, adore Him, avow ourselves His subjects and disciples, and, if need be, His soldiers, ready and willing to shed our blood for Him; or we care nothing for Him, pass Him by without so much as honoring Him with a salute, but also without insulting Him. In a word, when there is question of truth men can be only friends or enemies, or indifferent; a fourth class, as far as I can see, is absolutely impossible. And so of the men who gathered about the cradle of the heavenly babe, who later on said, "I am the truth," each class took up its proper place. The friends, or the shepherds and the Magi, cast themselves at His feet, adored Him, and offered Him gifts; the enemies, or Herod, the leaders of the people, the courtiers and the politicians of that day, feared Him, hated Him, and scarcely was He born when they sent assassins to

murder Him; many others, the Scribes and Pharisees, lawyers and members of the Sanhedrim, when asked by Herod and the Magi; "Where is He who is born king of the Jews, the Messias"? reply, "At Bethlehem." They took no pains to seek Him out, nor did they follow the example of the Magi; not one of them stirred from Jerusalem, or went to near-by Bethlehem. It seems, too, that the bulk of the people, which is almost incredible, imitated the Great Council and the lawyers, since it is not said in the Gospel that a single one from the city accompanied the Magi. These are the indifferent.

Now, what took place in the case of Our Lord in the very first days of His life on earth must take place as regards the Church, which is the visible prolongation of the life of Jesus Christ in the world. So also the Church has had in every age and has still her devoted friends, and her implacable and ferocious enemies, and she has found and finds now, more than at any time in the past, men indifferent to her. In every age we find about the Church devoted shepherds and Magi, cruel and hypocritical Herods, and men, among them leaders of the people, who in word and deed say, "Why should Christ or His Church concern us? We attend to our own business and to politics; the Gospel, the Church, and a life to come have no interest for us."

On this day on which Jesus Christ first solemnly manifested Himself to the Gentiles, my brethren, you will kindly bear with me while I speak of the third class of men, of those, namely, who as regards the Church show themselves either practically or theoretically *indifferent;* they neither take sides with Herod nor do they go with the Magi to Bethlehem; they live in the most absolute *indifference,* just as if there were no Christ, no Church, no religion, and as if all were to end in the grave.

Let us examine, first, What is the reason why at this day the number of men utterly indifferent as to religion has so enormously increased; and secondly, How those men outrage, not only reason, but common-sense, in allying themselves to a party, if not the most wicked of all parties, certainly the most ignoble and abject.

What is this religious indifference with which in our day so many Christians are smitten and tainted? It is a sort of impoverishment of intellectual blood, a consumptive, feverish wasting away of the mental tissue. Is God, religion, or the Church mentioned? They shrug their shoulders, smile, and say, "Let us talk of something else." Does any one ask whence man comes? whither does he go? what are his duties to God? they yawn and say, "What do we know about all this?" No matter what religious topic is brought

up, the indifferent are annoyed, change the subject, and say: "These things should not be discussed; what interest have they for us? We have something else to think of." Religious indifference is neither love nor hatred, neither knowledge nor ignorance, neither light nor darkness, neither death nor life; it is a nausea, a loathing of the truth, a torpor and sleep of intellect and will; it is a moral decrepitude; it is water that does not run, that stands still, becomes stagnant and corrupt.

There are many causes for this moral and religious sickness, which in many respects is more fatal to religion than the most rabid hatred, for in the latter at least there is force and there is life, while in the former there is only inertia, the spirit is in an agony. I will now hastily touch upon the principal of these causes.

The political, economic, social, and domestic conditions of peoples have undergone and are still constantly undergoing such profound modifications, that a comparison between the present conditions and those that existed a hundred years back is hardly possible.

The many and marvelous discoveries in every department of what is knowable to man, and especially those applicable to industry, commerce, and the means of communication between people and people, continent and continent, have increased production, labor, and the conveniences

of life a hundred-fold; men are in a sense intoxicated by them and are bewildered at the works of their hands. They are hurried along, almost taken off their feet, by this vertiginous movement of the material world; night and day they are overtaxed by work or immersed in the pleasures that wealth makes possible, or in quest of wealth to procure them; they are bewildered and deafened by the tumult and noise of the world, and, without adverting to it, they find neither the time, nor the means, nor have they the desire to rise above material things, to fix their thoughts upon the spiritual world and upon supersensible truths, to draw nearer to God and meditate upon Him. To all this immense multitude, and to those especially who live in the bustle and excitement of cities and great industrial centers, everything that is not material and does not appeal to the senses and give them pleasure is as nothing, is as if it did not exist. In these great centers of industrial activity, which give an impulse to all society, the individual is like an atom that is caught up and tossed about by a whirlwind; he is like a drop of water that the impetuous torrent hurries along in its flood. It would seem that to these poor men, tossed hither and thither by the ceaseless turmoil of the society in which they must necessarily live, not a ray of light can come from above, not a voice that can lift them up to a higher

plane and a purer atmosphere and make them realize that above this world of sense and matter there is another, and that where this life ends another begins. The natural consequence of this state of things is an utter indifference to everything that relates to God, or that concerns the soul and a life to come; in other words, its consequence is religious indifference. In the measure in which men are steeped in the affairs of this visible world do they lose sight of religion, whose roots and whose life are in the world unseen.

Add to this the spirit that animates modern legislation and pervades the whole social structure. Studies that have for their object the First Cause, God, the soul, and other similar subjects, are nearly all banished from the higher places of learning, and only those are held in esteem, encouraged, and rewarded, that refer to matter, or that promise a return either in money or material enjoyment? Who speaks now to young students of religion? And if some little attention is given to it, this is done almost stealthily, after school hours, and for a very brief space of time; and the elementary religious teaching that is given, while it may suffice for youths of tender years, is wholly insufficient for grown-up men, struggling against violent and rebellious passions and exposed to dangers of all kinds which they must necessarily encounter later on in the world.

When, then, there is no religious instruction for youths, or only such as is wholly inadequate to the need; when there are no religious exercises and no religion in the army; when religion is banished from the Government and from its offices and official proceedings; in a word, when every sort of appeal to religious principle is wholly excluded from society, and when the causes that will lead society to ignore religion, to forget it, despise it, and make war on it, are immeasurably increased—when all this is verified, I ask, is not religious indifference a necessary consequence? Religion may be likened to a steam-vessel that bears us across the ocean of life to the shores of eternity; if by neglecting to supply fuel to the fire we allow it to go out, the vessel will little by little decrease its speed; and if we take in the sails, and do not even have recourse to the poor expedient of rowing, it will come to a standstill in mid-ocean and be tossed hither and thither by the winds. This is an image of our society, from which the fire, the breath, and strength of religion are being steadily withdrawn, and all the while the passions of men, both individually and collectively, grow stronger and more turbulent.

Yes, my dear friends! The conveniences and comforts of life, which, owing to new social conditions, have so enormously increased; the fabulous growth of private incomes; the giving of the mind

wholly to the pursuit of material things; the pride so natural to men both wealthy and educated, which leads them to believe in their own self-sufficiency; and the refinement of sensuous pleasures, all have contributed to produce an epicureanism which is the prolific parent of the *indifferentism* that is the bane and torment of our society. It is a moral and religious sickness, most difficult to cure, because it is not, properly speaking, an error, but rather an absence of truth, a sleep of mind and heart, a debility of spirit. Let us try to rouse those men of culture from the torpor of religious indifference and let us make an effort to open their eyes to the light of truth.

Let us for a moment consider the Catholic Church as she presents herself to us, just as she is and with all her past, which includes the whole story of the human family. She lays hold of man at his very origin; she accompanies him down through the ages, through the patriarchs she comes down with him to Moses, and from Moses on through a long line of prophets she comes down to Christ, and from Christ through the apostles she goes forward to the conquest of the entire world, and to-day she has her victorious standards planted on every point of the known globe. There never was, there is not, and there never will be on this earth a society more vast in extent or more glorious in every respect than this; she fills all

ages and covers all space; she faces every test and is victorious over every trial, whether of sword or fire, of sophism or deceit, and she has never shirked a single conflict. Her teaching is so simple, so profound, and effective that it is the marvel of the world; by the power of her preaching and by persuasion she has subjugated her armed enemies; she has covered the whole world with the monuments of her power and greatness; she has transformed everything, institutions, laws, customs, literature, and arts. Civilization and progress have walked in her footsteps, virtue and holiness encircled her as a heavenly aureola. Millions and millions of books have been written in her defense. She counts by millions those who have poured out their blood for her; she counts her children from the beginning by billions and billions, and among them the greatest names in science, art, and letters.

Now this Church says that she is a daughter of heaven and the work of God; she protests that she comes from heaven, that she has a commission to gather all peoples under her wings and to bind them together in one faith and lead them to God; she fearlessly affirms that she is the sole possessor of the truth, that those who are with her will be saved and that those who separate from her will be lost. She protests that she is ready to show any one, who wills, the proof of her divine mis-

sion and to demonstrate it from reason. Now, my friends, I ask, can any reasonable man stand face to face with this Church, survey her critically from head to foot, and then shake his head and walk away, saying: "I am not concerned in the least about this Church; the study of her claims is not worth either the time or the trouble; what does it matter to me whether her teachings are true or false, whether she comes from God or is the creation of man?" Language more irrational than this never came from the mouth of man; it is the language of ignorance and cynicism, the language of the *indifferent* man. We do not say to him: "Believe in this Church, accept her teachings, and observe her laws." No; but we do say: "Examine her origin, search the proofs that she presents, weigh them, discuss them, and then decide." He replies: "I don't want to examine anything, or to discuss anything. What interest has this Church or this religion for me?" I appeal to you if such language is not an insult to reason.

Should there appear either in the heavens or on the earth some strange phenomenon, men immediately rush out, and gaze, and ask: What is it? Whence does it come? How can it be explained? What is the meaning of it? The illiterate and the learned are all excited; they want to know something of this phenomenon, some explanation, and they give themselves no peace until some reason,

good or bad, is given for its appearance. This is a need, a necessity of our nature, and we can not escape from its influence.

Now, then, here before us is a phenomenon the most singular and the most stupendous that it is possible to conceive; it is the religious sentiment manifesting itself in individuals and peoples in forms the most varied and producing the most marvelous effects. All men, all without exception, in every age and in every clime, yearn for the supersensible, reach out to the invisible, contemplate, honor, cherish, and invoke a mysterious being and sometimes many of them. The fetich prostrates himself before filthy figures and symbols; the Pagans adore miserable creatures as if they were gods; then there are the Mussulmans, the Buddhists, and the Brahmins, the disciples of Fu and the followers of Zoroaster and Confucius; again there are the Hebrews and the Christians of various Churches—all speak of God, of another life, of a heaven-sent doctrine, of religion, and of divine laws; and each sets up a claim that its religion is the only true one. Has the whole human race throughout all the ages been insane? Reason and nature protest; it is impossible. This religious sentiment which is the birthright of every man and is found among all peoples, different indeed in its manifestations but at bottom the same, comes from nature and is inseparable from it, and

hence it can not be deceptive. Now I ask: Are all these manifestations of the religious sentiment of equal value? Are they all equally good? Are they all religious? This would be equivalent to saying that doctrines that contradict one another are all equally true; that the Pagan, who holds that there are many gods, is right; that the Mussulman, who adores only one God, is right; that the Hebrew, who blasphemes Christ, and the Christian, who believes in Him, are both right. This would be the height of absurdity. What, then, is to be done? We say that nature, reason, and history tell us there is a God, and that therefore there must a true religion; now there are very many religions, all in conflict with one another, whereas there can be only one true religion. We should seek the true; this is the conclusion of common-sense. But the *indifferent* man tells us, smiling cynically: "Don't worry; whether they be all true or all false, what difference does it make? Never mind turning over the pages of books and consulting men; don't take the least trouble to find out if there be a religion at all, or if there is one, whether it be true or false. Eat, drink, sleep, amuse yourselves, enjoy yourselves, do what you like, and let come what will." Now I ask you again: Is not this an outrage upon reason? Reason is made to know truth and to reject error; all profess to wish to know the truth, even

in matters of trifling importance; the cry that goes out from the heart of mankind is: I want to know the truth and the truth alone at no matter what cost. But the indifferent man protests: "What is truth? It is labor lost to seek for it; it is wisest not to give it a thought and to live as if there were no such thing." I can scarcely find words to characterize a man who so speaks, and you I fancy think as I do.

Say to a man, "You are ignorant," and you offer him an atrocious insult; the insult will be still more atrocious if he, to whom it is offered, regards himself as a man of talent and culture; and it will be yet more atrocious and intolerable if, to the imputation of being ignorant, you add that, not only is he so, but that he rejoices in his ignorance. Such an insult no man of honor will quietly bear, and he is right. Now note that the indifferent man is not only ignorant of the subject of religion but he boasts of being so, and to add to his shame, he is rarely one of the plain people; he will nearly always be found among those who give themselves to study, and, it may be, he has been gifted with fair talents. The plain people are hardly ever indifferent; to be so is contrary to their nature, which is open, frank, and generous.

If you question an indifferent man, you will find that he does not know the elements of the catechism and is wholly ignorant of the fundamental

dogmas of religion. He has never opened a book treating of religion and has never consulted any one who could enlighten him; he has very rarely, if at all, listened to the preaching of the word of God, and if any one should begin to speak of religion in his presence, he will reply: "I have no time to study such things; I have something else to do. What good are they anyhow? We shall get on equally well without them." Indifference, if we analyze it, is nothing more or less than sheer ignorance, which attempts to mask itself in sneering contempt and in arrogant phrases, such as: "I have no use for such things."

And why should you have no use for what concerns you so nearly and with which is bound up your everlasting future of weal or woe? How, in view of the tremendous problems of life and death and future destiny, can you remain insensible and indifferent to such portentous questions?

There is a God, the whole human race bears witness to Him, reason tells you of Him, the universe proclaims Him, your secret conscience makes you feel His presence within you; and should you deny or doubt this I can only compassionate you as the most unfortunate and unhappy of men. But if there is a God, He may have spoken to you and laid laws upon you, and He may require you to observe them.

These truths are as clear as a mathematical demonstration. Can you say: "There is no religion," or, "all religions are equally true"? Have you the courage to say: "I am absolutely certain that the future life is an invention of priests, a creation of the imagination"? If, then, it is possible that there may be a religion, a future life, a paradise for the virtuous, and a hell for the wicked, as all people have in various ways affirmed, am I reasonable in saying: "I do not care to be bothered with these things"? Am I respectful toward God when in act I say: "Whether God has spoken to me or not gives me no concern"? Possibly when I depart from this life I may find myself in the presence of God, who will demand of me a strict account as to my observance of His commands, and if I have violated them He will punish me severely; and this being so, am I not to give any thought to such things, and not even to wish to think of them? Let us confess, my friends, that conduct such as this is an outrage both to man and God, and is the height either of stupidity or cynicism, I know not which. And yet there are thousands, aye, hundreds of thousands of men, who, if not in words, then in conduct, reason just this way. Wonderful! No one who has not lost his reason would act in this way in a temporal affair of the slightest importance, and yet there are so many who so act in the

greatest of all affairs, that of religion and the life to come. One would think such stupidity incredible and impossible if we did not have examples of it under our eyes.

And what is the cure for this baleful infirmity? I distinguish two classes of indifferentists: First, those who know the truth and see their duty, but who from feebleness of will live as if they knew neither the one nor the other; such were the teachers of the Great Council of Jerusalem, who knew the truth so well that they indicated it to the Magi. Next, there are those who are indifferent because of their lack of knowledge, and because, whatever be the reason, they have not applied themselves to the study of religion. To the former I would say: "My friends, your fault is a serious one and wholly without excuse. To know the truth, to know your religion and to know the duties it imposes, to know that there is a future and a never-ending life, to know that God will judge every one according to his works and that His sentence will be irrevocable, and then to live as if all these truths were dreams and fables, is something unworthy of reasonable men. It is to part with your common-sense and to pronounce your own condemnation. Be up and doing, shake off this torpor that has you in its grasp, come out from this deadly lethargy; let your works be in keeping with the faith that is in your hearts; once for all, let there be an end of this shameful contradiction

of confessing God in words and denying Him in deeds. Betake yourselves to daily prayer, listen to the word of God and lay it to heart, observe the laws of God and frequent the sacraments as often at least as the Church prescribes; these are the infallible means by which to kindle again in your hearts the sacred flame of the fervor of charity."

To those who are indifferent because they are ignorant of the truth, because they keep their eyes forever fixed on the miserable fleeting things of earth and never give a thought to the things of heaven, I would say: "There is no time to lose; your indifference is the child of ignorance, and the only remedy for ignorance is knowledge, and the only way to gain knowledge is to study."

To you men of talent and learning I would say: "Study; study God; study religion; study with upright, candid minds; study from love of truth, resolved as soon as its light dawns upon your minds to embrace it; and be assured you will find it. Never was it known that any one honestly sought religious truth and did not find it. Great God, how many men study for years and years, with a persistency that is amazing, things of little or of no importance—a cipher, an inscription, a parchment, a hieroglyphic, a microbe, and can not find a few hours a week to give to the study of themselves, their origin and end, to the study of God and His religion! Which of you would not

blush for very shame, if at the age of fifty you knew no more than you did at the age of twelve? And as regards religion this is true of most of you. When you arrive at the age of fifty or sixty you are content with the meager knowledge of religion you had when you were twelve, when you made your first holy communion, if indeed you have retained even that much intact. How can you hope with the little knowledge you had at twelve to preserve the Faith at sixty? It would be as if you tried to preserve life through your years of youth, manhood, and on to old age with the food you took when a boy. This is why the faith you had at twelve and fifteen ends in indifference at thirty and forty. The study of religion, then, is necessary for you, a study in keeping with your talents and culture, with your state of life, your special needs and duties and the dangers that encompass you. May each of you be able to say some day with La Harpe: " 'I have believed because I have examined; do you also examine, as I have examined, and you too will believe.' "

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